

BUILDERS
OF
MODERN
INDIA

RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI

DR M. HASHIM KIDWAI

ABOUT THE BOOK

This handy biographical narration by Dr M. Hashim Kidwai presents a graphic first hand description of the composed yet colourful personality of that "miracle man", Rafi Ahmad Kidwai who could face and out-wit any opponent. A great organiser, administrator and a dauntless crusader for the down-trodden, he was committed to socialism and nationalism to the core and was an embodiment of the composite Indian culture. A mass leader with a throbbing heart, he shunned publicity and worked at the grass roots level effectively for the cause of the common man irrespective of class and creed. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai was, in fact, a *Karma Yogi*, a man of all out action who moved deep into the India's struggle for freedom and its consolidation.

The volume provides an in depth reading and serves as a window into the Indian polity of the pre-partition era.

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Dedicated to
the inspiring leadership of
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
the architect of modern India

ABOUT THE SERIES

The object of the Builders of Modern India series is to record for the present and future generations, the story of the struggles and achievements of the great sons and daughters of India, who have been mainly instrumental to our national renaissance and the attainment of the Independence. Except in a few cases, such authoritative biographies have not been available.

The biographies are planned as handy volumes written by knowledgeable persons and giving a brief account, in simple words, of the life and activities of the eminent leaders and of their times. They are not intended either to be comprehensive or to replace the more elaborate biographies.

The work of writing these lives has to be entrusted to different authors. It has, therefore, not been possible to publish the biographies in a chronological order. It is hoped, however, that within a short period all major national personalities would figure in this series.

Shri R. R. Diwakar is the General Editor of the series.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, a true representative of the Indian composite culture, was one of the stalwarts of the Freedom Struggle who with every ounce of their strength helped the infant Free India grow into a strong Republic. Rafi Ahmad's contribution as a crusader for national freedom, as a statesman and as an administrator is laudable.

The Publications Division has the pleasure to present to its readers this book on Rafi Ahmad which gives a vivid account of his life, devoted to the service of the Indian Nation. The book has been authored by Dr M. Hashim Kidwai—one of Rafi Ahmad's ardent admirers.

Dr Shyam Singh Shashi
DIRECTOR
PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

PREFACE

I had the proud privilege of not only having very close contact with Rafi Sahib but had also the unique advantage of working under his guidance. This contact continued for about 17 years i.e. from 1938 till Rafi Sahib's death.

As the General Secretary of Lucknow Students Federation whenever I, alongwith some colleagues approached Rafi Sahib, he very kindly extended every possible help. On various occasions he sent even telegrams to our benefit to the Congress leaders, who had earlier expressed their inability to preside over or inaugurate the students' conferences, organised by the Lucknow or U.P. Students Federation. For instance, in December 1941, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari was to come to Lucknow to deliver the Lucknow University Convocation address. I, as the General Secretary of Lucknow Students Federation, requested Rajaji to address our meeting but C.R. expressed his inability. On approaching Rafi Sahib, he wired to him to accept our invitation which Rajaji did and addressed a largely attended meeting, held at Aminabad Park over which Rafi Sahib presided. In May 1942, when the war had come very close to Indian border with Japanese invasion expected any moment and public panic on the increase, the Lucknow Students Federation decided to hold a national unity conference. Mr. Satya Murti—the then Deputy leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly and Shaikh Hisamuddin, President of All India Majlis-e-Ahrar and a number of other leaders were invited. The aim of the conference was that people should prepare themselves to fight the Japanese aggressors and remain united. I, alongwith Mr. Balram Singh, the founder of All India Students Federation, approached Rafi Sahib and sought his help. He very much welcomed the

idea of holding of such a conference and helped us in every possible way and even made arrangements for the lodging of Mr. Satya Murti and other invitees. However, on account of his arrest, the conference could not be held. After his release in July 1945, the Students Federation arranged a reception in his honour. Mr. Abdul Qayyum Khan, the then Deputy leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly, happened to be in Lucknow in connection with some murder case. We invited him also. And Rafi Sahib welcomed it. Later, the date of the reception had to be changed to suit Rafi Sahib's convenience and we went to inform Khan Sahib accordingly. But he was untraceable for two days. When we informed Rafi Sahib about it, he apprehended that Mr. Khan was about to leave the Congress, that was why he had been avoiding us. He advised us to contact him at lunch time. We, alongwith Mr. Devendra Pratap Singh of Mankapur, former Deputy President of U.P. Legislative Council and the then President of the Federation, went to Mr. Khan's room in the Royal Hotel and found on his table a letter of Ch. Khaliquzzaman, advising Mr. Khan to release his letter for publication from Lucknow.

The Khan did not agree to accept our invitation. On Rafi Sahib's advice, we again entreated the Khan to attend our function but he did not agree. The next day Mr. Khan's resignation from the Congress was published in the papers and all of us were wonder-struck with Rafi Sahib's faculty of foreseeing things.

In July-August 1945, I founded the Nationalist Muslim Students Federation to fight the Muslim League separatism on the student front and Rafi Sahib helped me and my colleagues in every possible way. In fact, he was the patron of our organisation and it was because of his help that we succeeded in establishing our branches in a number of districts of U.P. and worked for the Congress and the Nationalist Muslim candidates in the Central Assembly and U.P. Assembly elections respectively

during the stormy pre-partition days under very heavy odds. Mr. Feroz Gandhi who was the publicity incharge of U.P. Congress, asked me to send teams of our workers to the three constituencies from where Rafi Sahib was contesting but Rafi Sahib forcefully asked us not to do so. But when we, in consultation with Mr. Feroz Gandhi, sent our team of workers to canvass support for him in Bahraich and Gonda, Rafi Sahib was annoyed with all of us.

During the election of U.P. Assembly, Pandit Nehru visited Lucknow in February 1946. On my request, Rafi Sahib fixed up a meeting of the workers of Nationalist Muslim Students Federation in his room at Councillor's Residence which was to be addressed by Panditji. Panditji was very happy to meet us and we told him of the great help which we received from Rafi Sahib. Panditji congratulated us and Rafi Sahib for our work.

During the dark days of September 1947 when ruthless massacre and carnage were taking place in Delhi and Punjab it appeared that communal peace in U.P. would be disturbed. At a meeting of leading Nationalist Muslims, leaders of *Jamiat-ul-Ulema* and Nationalist Muslim Students Federation, Rafi Sahib called upon Muslims not to become desperate but work for communal peace and harmony by holding meetings and seeking the help of nationalist Hindus and to help the refugees who were coming to U.P. in large numbers. In accordance with his advice, the Nationalist Muslim Students Federation and *Jamiat-ul-Ulema* arranged several meetings in Lucknow at which emphasis was laid on communal peace and harmony. Consequently, Nationalist Muslims joined the Citizens Relief Committee which had been formed by Messers Gopi Nath Srivastava and Triloki Singh—Rafi Sahib's lieutenants and U.P. Congress leaders of liberal outlook to render relief to refugees.

I joined the Aligarh Muslim University as a lecturer in Political Science because of Rafi Sahib and often went to Delhi

and stayed at his residence. When in 1952, the Youth Congress was formed, I being incharge of the Aligarh Muslim University Youth Congress Organisation, persuaded Rafi Sahib to attend the Convention of the Youth Congress in December 1952.

This book is my effort as a humble admirer and devotee of Rafi Sahib, who was a source of inspiration to me, to narrate the inspiring story of the life of this great nationalist leader who will always be remembered by the nation.

I have collected the material from the old files of *The Pioneer*, *The Leader*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The National Herald*, special Kidwai Numbers of *The National Herald*, *The Qaumi Awaz* of Lucknow, *Pyam-e-Mashriq* of Delhi and the very brilliant and highly informative serialised articles by 'Raffian', published in the *National Herald*, New Delhi in October and November, 1972 and Dr Pran Nath Chopra's book *Rafi Ahmad Kidwai—His Life and Work*. I acknowledge with thanks all the agencies for the source material. Persons noble as Rafi Sahib are born rarely :

*Hazaron sal Nargis apni be-noori pe roti hai
Bari mushkil se hota hai chaman mein deedavar paida*

I thank most my dear old student and ward, Mr. Arif Mohammad Khan—the Union Minister of State for Power who, soon after being appointed as the Deputy Minister for Information and Broadcasting, asked me to write this book.

I am also indebted to my friend and old classfellow, Mr. Abrar Ahmad Kidwai, a cousin of Rafi Sahib for providing details of Rafi Sahib's family and his ancestry.

M. Hashim Kidwai

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Background

THE ANNULMENT OF the partition of Bengal in 1911 was regarded as a great injury to the Muslim cause. Nawab Saleemullah Khan who presided over the Muslim League Session held at Calcutta in 1912, lamenting the announcement, expressed a definite desire for a rapprochement between Hindus and Muslims.

Besides on the foreign scene the Indian Muslims saw in the British foreign policy towards Turkey a deliberate hostility to Islam. They saw in it a deliberate attempt for the extinction of the temporal power of Islam to whose head they owed their allegiance as he was the *Khilafat-ul-Muslimin* and their spiritual head. The Indian Muslims thus alienated from the British Government, the old ultra loyalist—Pro-British leadership of Aligarh or Sir Syed School became extremely unpopular and its place was taken up by Mohammad Ali, Abul Kalam Azad, Mazharul Haque and M.A. Jinnah. The mentor of the new and young Muslim leadership was Maulana Shibli and this leadership stood for Hindu-Muslim unity and closer ties between the Congress and the Muslim League.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad began to flay the British policy alive in his weekly *Al Hilal*. His fiery articles sent a wave of indignation and fury throughout the Muslim community.

Mohammad Ali started the weekly *Comrade* in English and the daily *Hamdard* in Urdu. With his faith shaken over the undoing of the partition of Bengal, the Tripoli and Balkan wars incited more hostility in him towards the British Government and he wrote in his papers passionately in favour of Turkey and against the British Government. The entry of Turkey into the First World War on the side of Germany led to the closure of the *Comrade* and the *Hamdard* and the internment and arrest of Mohammad Ali and his brother Shaukat Ali for the duration of the war and a year after. Plans to overthrow the British Government in India were prepared and Maulana Mahmood Hasan—the principal of the religious seminary of Deoband, with the help of Dr. Ansari and others, sent Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi to Kabul to obtain help from the Amir of Afghanistan in the form of an invasion on India. A provisional government with Raja Mahendra Pratap, a revolutionary, as president was set up at Kabul. Maulana Mahmood Hasan migrated to Mecca and from there he got silk letters secretly dispatched to India and Afghanistan. He was handed over by Shareef Hussain of Mecca to the British Government and the Maulana alongwith Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madni, Uzairgul and a few other companions were deported to Malta where they remained as prisoners till the end of the war. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad too was interned by the Government and kept in detention for nearly four years. The *Al Hilal* Press was confiscated under the Press Act. So *Al Hilal* had to be closed down.

The younger Muslim leaders wanted a change in the policy of the Muslim League. Men like Jinnah, Mohammad Ali and Mazharul Haque took the reins in their hands and eventually prevailed upon Ulema to join the League. The League had now been transformed into a middle-class organisation. At

its Lucknow session in 1913 its object or promotion of loyalty towards the British Government was substituted with the attainment of self government suited to India under the aegis of the British Crown. This brought it closer to the Congress. At its session of 1915, a further step was taken in strengthening the Congress and the League relations. The two met at the same place, that is in Bombay, and a large number of Congress leaders like Gandhiji, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Sarojini Naidu attended the League session and a committee was appointed by the League for formulating a common scheme of political reforms in consultation with other communities.

In 1916, the Congress and the Muslim League held their sessions in Lucknow and the two organisations entered into a Pact known as the Lucknow Pact. There was complete agreement on Constitutional reforms which they had decided to urge upon the Government. The Congress conceded the League demand for separate electorate in all the provinces while the League agreed to have 50 percent seats in the Punjab and 40 percent in Bengal for Muslims and weightage granted to Muslims in Hindu majority provinces. The Muslim apprehensions concerning their culture and religious laws were removed by the provision that no bill or resolution concerning a community could be passed if three-fourths of the representatives of that community in legislatures were opposed to it. The Pact showed that there was no inherent and impossible barrier which could not yield to the spirit of accommodation. It brought closer not only the two organisations but also the two major communities.

After the Lucknow League-Congress Pact of 1916, Mrs. Annie Besant started the movement for the attainment of Home Rule, i.e. grant of self-government to India on the model

of British Dominions. Branches of the Home Rule League were formed in different parts of the country. Mrs. Besant made a whirl-wind tour all over the country. The Home Rule agitation alarmed the Government and in June 1917, Mrs. Besant was interned.

On 20 August 1917, an announcement was made by Montague, the then Secretary of State for India that the British Government aimed at the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India.

Finally, the Government of India Act of 1919 was passed under which radical changes were introduced in the Government. At the Centre, in both the houses of the legislature, there was a majority of elected members. Three Indians were now to be the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, but the Government of India was not made responsible to the Legislative Assembly, the lower house. The Assembly could reject the votable items of the budget, reject bills, refuse to vote grants of votable items of the budget and pass censure motions against the Government. The Viceroy had wide powers of certifying the rejected bills, restoring cuts passed and disallowing measures passed by the Assembly. But in the provinces, partial responsible government or dyarchy had been established. Provincial departments were divided into transferred and reserved halves. The transferred half which included education, public health and local self government was put under the charge of ministers who were to be appointed from among the elected members and were made responsible to the Provincial Legislative Councils in which there was a clear majority of elected members. The other half of the Provincial Government continued to be in the hands of the Executive Councillors.

The First World War had ended in November 1918 and Great Britain and her allies had succeeded in defeating Germany and her other allies—Turkey and Austria. The Indian Muslims were very much perturbed over the future of Turkey as a very harsh peace treaty was imposed upon that country reducing it to utter ruin. They also feared that the holy places of Islam like Mecca, Madina and Jerusalem would pass into the hands of non-Muslim powers. An organisation known as the All-India Khilafat Committee thereafter came into being in 1919. The Indian Muslim divines also formed their organisation, the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind*, which also expressed its grave concern over the future of holy places of Islam, the Khilafat and the dismemberment of the Turkish empire. In December 1919, the session of the Congress and Khilafat was held at Amritsar. This session was attended by the Ali Brothers and it was at this session that Muslims joined the Congress enbloc and the supreme leadership of the Congress passed into the hands of Gandhiji. The Congress had been transformed into a mass national organisation.

When the British Government did not pay any heed to the demands of Muslims, the Khilafat Conference accepted Gandhiji's Non-Cooperation Programme which was accepted by the Congress in 1920. Gandhiji exercised his magnetic personality and unique influence to win over the Congress in favour of the Khilafat demand. In 1919, the highly expressive Rowlatt Act was passed and Satyagraha was started against it. Gandhiji gave a call for general strike and excitement mounted daily. The country was ablaze with defiant agitation. Michael O'Dwyer, the Lt. Governor of the Punjab, determined to hold aloft the banner of imperial prestige, ruthlessly crushed the agitation. The policy culminated in the large scale massacre of Jallianwala Bagh. In reply, the Congress and the Khilafat launched a mass struggle against the

Government with the triple purpose of winning Swaraj, rectification of the Punjab wing and rehabilitation of the Khilafat. Over 18000 Muslims from Punjab and Western parts of India migrated to Afghanistan. A *fatwa* signed by over 900 Muslim divines approved the Non-Cooperation programme and advised all Muslims to carry it out as a religious duty. The main items of the Non-Cooperation programme were :

- (1) Determination to secure complete fulfilment of the Khilafat demands;
- (2) Rejection of any terms imposing limitations on Turkish sovereignty;
- (3) Refusal to accept non-Muslim control over the holy places of Islam;
- (4) Declaration that it was religiously unlawful for Muslims to continue in the British army;
- (5) To boycott courts, and lawyers and barristers were to give up their practices;
- (6) Students were to leave those educational institutions which were receiving aid from the Government;
- (7) Government servants were to resign from their posts. Titles were also to be renounced;
- (8) Announcement of breaking laws;
- (9) Boycott of election to the legislature;
- (10) Boycott of British goods and encouragement of Swadeshi, especially Khadi.

There was complete Hindu-Muslim unity and both the communities vied with each other in defying the Government

by breaking the law and preaching sedition. Thousands cheerfully went to jail and bore lathi charges. Lawyers abandoned practice, teachers resigned and students withdrew from schools and colleges. When the trustees of A.M.O. college did not agree to refuse government grant, about 200 students of the college left the institution and joined the Jamia Millia Islamia or National Muslim University, established by Mohammad Ali.

Gandhiji and Ali Brothers became the most prominent and popular leaders during those days. They toured the whole country which was profoundly stirred and an unprecedented wave of enthusiasm ran through India's teeming millions. Unparalleled scenes of fervour, devotion and sacrifices were witnessed everywhere. From 1 August 1920, when it started, to 6 February 1922 when it was suspended, the Non-Cooperation Movement had moved in crescendo. The movement was the first unarmed revolt not only in the history of India but also in the entire world history. It shook the foundation of the British empire and over 30,000 Indians courted imprisonment. It was sustained by the enthusiasm, devotion and self sacrificing spirit of the people. Although the movement failed to achieve Swaraj, its gains were : (1) the general awakening of masses to their political rights and privileges; (2) the total loss of faith in the existing system of the government; (3) the firm belief that it was only through their own efforts that Indians could aspire to be free; (4) the faith in the Congress as the only organisation which could properly direct national effort to attain freedom and (5) the utter failure of Government repression to cow down the people. The movement transformed the Congress into a mass national organisation and strengthened the morale of the people so essential for a free society. It also removed the illusion that the freedom loving and democratic

people of Great Britain intended to educate the backward Indian people in the ways of self-government.

The violent incident at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district, i.e. burning a number of policemen by the violent mob so much moved Gandhiji that he suspended the Non-Cooperation Movement and abandoned the programme of Civil Disobedience Movement which was to start from Bardoli in Gujarat. The suspension of the movement led to its collapse and the division of the Congress into two hostile groups—changers who wanted to abandon the boycott of legislature in order to use them for national purposes and no-changers led by C. Rajagopalachari who were in favour of Non-Cooperation and the boycott programme of legislature. Gandhiji was arrested and sentenced to six years imprisonment.

C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru on their release formed the Swaraj Party to contest election. Ultimately, through the efforts of Maulana Mohammad Ali and Abul Kalam Azad, at the special session of the Congress held at Delhi under the presidentship of Maulana Azad, a compromise was made and Congressmen were permitted to contest elections. In C.P. and Bengal, the Swarajists were in a position to command the majority while in other Provincial Councils, they were returned in considerable strength and in the Central Assembly they constituted the opposition. The Khilafat agitation also lost its elan when the new Khalifa was shorn of all political authority in October 1922 by the Turkish nationalists. Two years later, the very institution of Khilafat was abolished by Mustafa Kamal. The collapse of the Non-Cooperation Movement was followed by the eruption of fierce Hindu-Muslim riots in various cities of Northern India from 1923 on the occasion of religious festivals of Hindus and Muslims i.e. *Moharram*, *Baqr Id* and *Dusshera*. These riots were engineered by the police and agents

of the Government under inspiration of the British officers by arousing religious susceptibilities of illiterate people of the two communities. The unprecedented Hindu-Muslim unity assiduously built up during the Non-Cooperation Movement was replaced by communal animosity. Gandhiji after his release, undertook a fast to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity and a number of unity conferences were held but these were of no avail and incidents of communal riots went on increasing. Hindu and Muslim communalist leaders started the *Shuddhi*, *Sangathan* and *Tanzeem* and *Tabligh* movements which preached hymns of hatred and these went to further widen the gulf between Hindus and Muslims. These pro-British communalist leaders of both the communities who had earlier become unpopular for opposing the Non-Cooperation Movement now became the popular leaders of their communities and the British Government began to patronise them. As a result, the Congress and the Khilafat organisations lost their popularity. Gandhiji retired from the active leadership of the Congress and in the election of 1926, the Swarajists lost heavily and Hindu and Muslim communalists were returned to legislatures. The Swarajist programme of creating deadlocks in legislatures and defeating the provincial ministries did not succeed on account of their depleted strength. In March 1927, Muslim leaders of different shades of opinion accepted Delhi proposals and gave up separate electorate and accepted joint electorate and demanded that in the central legislature Muslims could have one third representation; Sindh should be separated from Bombay Presidency; N.W.F.P. and British Baluchistan should be raised to the status of Governors' province and in Punjab and Bengal Muslims should have statutory majority. These proposals were accepted by the Congress but, unfortunately, the Hindu Mahasabha and some Hindu Congress leaders began to oppose it. This further vitiated the atmosphere.

The Government of India Act of 1919 had provided that the working of the constitutional reforms would be reviewed by a statutory commission appointed by the British Government and this commission would also suggest to what extent any constitutional advancement could be recommended. It was also to judge whether constitutional reforms in India had been a success or not. Apprehending victory of the Labour Party in the election of British Parliament of 1929, the ruling Conservative Party decided to appoint the statutory commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon in 1927, two years before it was due. The good effect by the appointment of the commission two years earlier was completely dissipated as no Indian was appointed as a member of the commission and the Indian opinion was unanimous in demanding that some members of the commission should be Indians. The British Government rejected this demand on the ground that since this commission was to judge whether the Indians were capable of governing themselves, the task could best be done only by the British who enjoyed the confidence of all communities and who were important. All political parties, including the moderates, decided to boycott the commission. So in the winter of 1928-29 wherever the commission went, there were black-flag demonstrations and general strikes. Only a handful of loyalists, communalists, landlords and ruling princes co-operated with the commission. Sir Shafi and a number of reactionary and loyalist Muslim leaders formed a parallel Muslim League. The Secretary of State meanwhile challenged Indians to draw up an agreed constitution. The Madras Congress of 1927, resolved by way of reply to the Simon Commission to call an All-Parties Conference to draw up a constitution and the conference appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Moti Lal Nehru for this purpose. The committee submitted its report before the All-Parties Conference held in August 1928 in

Lucknow. The report accepted Dominion Status as the goal and the constitution envisaged by it was federal but residuary powers were to be with the Centre. As there were to be no separate electorates, no weightage and no statutory majority were provided for Muslims in Punjab and Bengal, the report was not acceptable to the majority of Khilafatists led by the Ali Brothers. Finally, at the National Convention held in Calcutta in December 1928 where the report was adopted, the majority of Muslims led by Ali Brothers left the Congress and this went to further widen the gulf between Hindus and Muslims.

In January 1929 the All-India Muslim Conference was formed. It was a reactionary and loyalist Muslim communalist organisation. Jinnah's 14 points were accepted as the Muslim demands which stressed separate electorate, weightage, federation, provincial autonomy, minority representation in services, separation of Sindh from Bombay presidency, constitutional reforms in N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan and safeguards for Muslim culture and law.

The Calcutta Congress session of December 1928 asked the British Government to grant Dominion Status to India as had been recommended by the Nehru report and it was decided that if by 31 December 1929 Dominion Status was not granted, the Congress would demand complete independence for the country.

Meanwhile, the British Government decided to convene a Round Table Conference in London. But as this assurance had not been given that this conference would draw up a Dominion constitution for immediate implementation, the Congress refused to attend the conference and at its annual session held in Lahore in December 1929, it passed a resolution

in favour of complete independence as its goal and authorised Gandhiji to lead a mass Civil Disobedience Movement to achieve it. This movement was started in April in the form of Salt Satyagraha and despite drastic repressive measures of the government, it continued unabated till January 1931. Over one lakh of persons were arrested. Majority of Muslims led by Ali Brothers did not join this movement although the Jama'iat-ul-Ulema and the *Khudai Khidmatgars* under Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and a number of other nationalist Muslims participated in it.

At the first session of the Round Table Conference, the Indian Princes expressed their willingness to join the Indian Federation. Other delegates also agreed with it. This was a big achievement for the Conference and the British Prime Minister accepted the proposal subject to some reservations in regard to the powers of the Federal Government.

In the last week of January 1931 members of the Congress Working Committee and Gandhiji were released and in March 1931, Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed and the Congress agreed to participate in the 2nd session of the Round Table Conference. Gandhiji was sent as the sole representative of the Congress to the conference. The conference was held in September and the outline of the constitution framed at the last session was the basis of discussion, but the atmosphere was unfavourable. The Labour Government had fallen and Ramsay Macdonald had left his party to become the Prime Minister of an essentially Conservative Government. The conference failed to arrive at any agreement about the representation of various communities in the provincial as well as central legislatures. The majority of delegates requested the Prime Minister to give his award on the number of seats for the various communities in legislatures.

Gandhiji returned to India greatly disappointed and on his return he found that the Government was determined on breaking the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and that forcible collections of land revenue were made from the Kisans of U.P. and Gujarat and other provinces who on account of steep fall in price of commodities were unable to pay it. In N.W.F.P. many restrictions had been put on the Red Shirts. Before Gandhiji's arrival, Jawaharlal Nehru and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan were arrested. The new Viceroy Lord Willingdon did not agree to meet Gandhiji and the Congress re-started the Civil Disobedience in January 1932 which was suppressed soon on account of highly repressive and stern measures of the Government. Gandhiji undertook a fast unto death as a protest against the provisions of the communal award that scheduled castes or Harijans were to be treated as separate electors to elect their representatives to provincial and central legislatures. Ultimately, the Poona Pact was signed between Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar and the scheduled castes were given double representation as against the one that had been given to them by the communal award but the electorate remained joint.

There was a stalemate in the country. The Congress was still an illegal organisation. After the conclusion of the third session of RTC, the British Government issued a white paper giving its proposals on questions discussed at the three sessions of the conference. The proposals were discussed by the Joint Select Committee of the Houses of Parliament and on the basis of deliberations and recommendations of this committee, the Government of India Act of 1935 was passed which received royal assent in August 1935.

Under the Act, the electorate was enlarged to as many as 30 million i.e. one out of every four adults was given the right to vote. Bigger provinces were to have bicameral legis-

latures. Assemblies were to be elected for five years and these did not have any nominated members. The Act enumerated provincial, concurrent and central subjects. Provinces were to have autonomy and popular ministers were to be responsible to the legislature. Governors possessed very wide special powers which constituted serious limitations on ministerial responsibility. In the meantime, two new provinces of Sindh and Orissa were created and Burma was separated from India. Provincial autonomy came into operation on 1 April 1937, while the Central Government was to be carried on in the same way as provided under the Act of 1919 till the operation of the Indian federation provided in the Act. The Act of 1935 had proposed a federation but this could come into being only when so many states joined it which constituted one half of the population and which again were entitled to send one half representatives to the Council of State and the decision to join the federation was to be made by the princes and this part, that is, federation never came into operation.

In 1934, the Congress participated in the central assembly election and it was the largest party or the main opposition party in the Assembly. It contested the provincial assembly elections in February 1937. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Congress President, conducted the election campaign vigorously and the Congress had won absolute majority in U.P., Bihar, Madras, Orissa and C.P. while in Bombay, it was the largest single majority party. The Congress President and leftist Congressmen were opposed to the acceptance of office by Congressmen. Ultimately, the Congress Working Committee decided that in provinces where Congress had secured majority, leaders of the Congress legislature parties should form ministry only when governors gave this assurance that they would not interfere with the day-to-day administration and would not

use their special powers. So first in six provinces and after sometime in Assam and N.W.F.P., the Congress formed ministries with the help of some other non-Congressmen. In U.P. elections there was a sort of understanding or pact between the Congress and the Muslim League which had been reorganised by Mr. Jinnah. Both the parties had fought the reactionary Zamindar parties. Before reorganising the League, Mr. Jinnah had sought the cooperation of Jamait-ul-Ulema and nationalist Muslims in fighting reactionaries and on his appeal they had joined the Muslim League. But after the election, a rupture occurred in U.P. between the Congress and the Muslim League over coalition ministry. Contrary to expectations in U.P. the Congress secured an absolute majority and was not willing to have any coalition ministry with the Muslim League. Finally, negotiations broke down because the Muslim League assembly party leader demanded two seats in the cabinet while the Congress was willing to take only one Muslim League member in the cabinet. The Muslim League's complexion underwent a radical change after its annual session held in Lucknow in October 1937. It had become a mass organisation after October 1937 and its goal was now changed to the attainment of full independence and soon it became an anti-Hindu organisation. It began to condemn the Congress as anti-Muslim or a Hindu organisation. The Muslim League held the view that as Hindu Raj had been established in the Congress majority provinces and Muslim rights had not been safeguarded, the parliamentary form of government was absolutely harmful to Muslims and this was not suited to India. In September 1939, India was declared to be a belligerent country, that is, at war with Germany. Soon after the declaration of war against Germany by the British Government, neither the central assembly nor the popular provincial ministries was consulted. So in accordance with the decision of the Congress Working Committee, Congress

ministries resigned. The Muslim League celebrated the day of deliverance on the resignation of Congress ministries. This very much widened the gulf between Hindus and Muslims. The Muslim League at its annual session, held in March 1940 in Lahore, demanded partition of the country on the basis of two-nation theory and said that as Muslims constituted the majority in North-West and North-East of India, a state of Pakistan should be conceded on the basis of self determination. It denied the existence of the Indian Nation. While the Congress demanded the formation of national government at the centre, the League demanded parity in this government.

When the Congress demand was not accepted by the British Government, it started the individual anti-war Satyagraha in October 1940 to register its protest against the imperialist war. When the war situation became highly critical after the fall of Burma, the Congress leaders were released in November 1941. Sir Stafford Cripps, a leading member of the British Cabinet was sent to India in March 1942 to negotiate with Indian leaders. His long-term proposals contained that at the end of the war a constituent assembly would be elected to frame the constitution but the provinces which did not join the proposed Indian Union could stand out and assume separately the same status as the Indian Union and the princely states which stood out, could negotiate a revision of their treaty arrangements. The Congress rejected this proposal as it meant opening the way to partition but it agreed to shelve the long-term question and concentrate upon interim arrangements. Negotiations broke down between the Congress and Cripps over the interim arrangements as Indian Defence Member was to have insignificant functions. The Congress rejected Cripps proposals and the Muslim League also arrived at the same decision. The Congress resolved to launch the mass Civil

Disobedience 'Quit India' struggle in August 1942 and asked the British Government to quit India and transfer political power to Indians. Gandhiji and most of the Congress leaders were arrested but the 'Quit India' Campaign was kept up in different parts of the country despite the repression of the Government. Thousands of Congressmen were arrested and hundreds killed as the police and the army had committed horrible atrocities on the people. At a number of places, acts of sabotage were committed and communications tampered with. The Muslim League bitterly opposed the 'Quit India' Movement as it enjoyed the patronage of the British Government and had its Governments in Assam, Sindh, N.W.F.P. and Bengal. The Congress was in wilderness for the remainder of the war, that is, for three years after the launching of 'Quit India' Movement. There was complete stalemate in the country. Consequently, C. Rajagopalachari came out with this proposal that the Muslim majority areas should be delimited along district boundaries, that a plebiscite should be held on the question of separation and if a majority of the whole population of those areas voted for partition, it should be implemented subject to a common arrangement for defence, foreign affairs, commerce and communication. But Mr. Jinnah did not accept these proposals.

Gandhiji was released in May 1944 on account of ill health and he met Jinnah in September 1944 to discuss the CR proposals. But Jinnah insisted on delimitation along the provincial boundaries, a plebiscite among Muslims only and total separation, leaving no centre. These talks broke down.

Germany was defeated in May 1945 and in June 1945 the Congress leaders were released and Lord Wavell proposed an interim government at the centre to see the war through, to carry

on until the new constitution came into force and to consider the arrangements for settling constitutional question.

He invited 21 leaders to Simla and since he could not get an agreement between the Congress and the League, he finally put before them a proposal whereby all the parties would send him a list of their nominees and he would make the final choice of the members of his executive council. The council was to have an equal number of Muslim members and caste Hindus but Jinnah was not willing that any non-League Muslims should be included in Viceroy's executive council as he held the view that the Muslim League represented 100 percent of Muslims. The Viceroy after consulting the British Government decided to hold elections to decide the issue whether the Muslim League represented cent per cent of Muslims. The Muslim League won all the 30 Muslim seats of central assembly as this body was elected on a restricted franchise while in the case of provincial assemblies the claim of the Muslim League was falsified that it represented cent per cent of Muslims. This was because the nationalist and Congress Muslims and Jamait Ulema despite official interference in favour of the Muslim League and very many handicaps and very heavy odds had succeeded in securing absolute majority in the Muslim majority province of N.W.F.P., and in annexing 12 of Muslim seats of U.P. Assembly, six Muslim seats of Bihar, six seats of Sindh Assembly, three of Assam Assembly and seven of Punjab Assembly.

In Great Britain, the Labour Party was returned to power. Mr. Attlee, the Prime Minister took the initiative and in March 1946 he sent Lord Pethick-Lawrence, the new Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. A.V. Alexander as members of the Cabinet Mission to negotiate with the Indian leaders the transfer of power to Indians. They discussed with

them Indian constitutional problems and the procedure for deciding about it.

The mission declared that it came with no plan but its efforts to accomodate the League demand for partition of the country alongwith the Congress demand for a united India led logically to the idea of federation with a loose Centre. The League was persuaded to agree to this. The Centre was to deal with foreign affairs, communication and Defence. The constituent assembly which was to be elected by the provincial assemblies on the basis of one member representing one million on the basis of separate electorate was to sit in three groups. The Muslim majority provinces of North-West were grouped under one group, while Hindu majority provinces were to form the other group B; Bengal and Assam were to constitute the C group and there was to be group or regional government; the constitution was to be framed by these groups and the grouping was compulsory while, at the same time, it was said that there was to be provincial autonomy.

The mission stayed in India for three months. The Viceroy was to go ahead with the formation of the interim government at the Centre on the Congress and Muslim League parity basis.

The long term plan was rejected by the League when the Congress held the view that the provinces were free to refuse to enter the group. The League refused to attend the session of the Constituent Assembly which had been elected in July 1946 and observed direct Action Day on 16 August 1946, which was followed by serious riots in Calcutta and Noakhali and later in Bihar. The League refused to join the interim government which was formed by the Congress and other parties in September 1946. Throughout the country there was growing

communal antagonism and hatred and it seemed there would occur serious civil war in the country. The Viceroy succeeded in bringing the Muslim League in the interim cabinet by the end of October 1946 but the League did not change its attitude. It decided to continue non-cooperation from within. It demanded that for the Muslim majority areas of North West and North East there should be a separate Constituent Assembly. Despite the declaration by the British Government that the grouping clause was compulsory the Muslim League did not join the Indian Constituent Assembly. The British Government replaced Lord Wavell by Lord Mountbatten and announced on 20 February 1947 that it would transfer power into Indian hands by June 1948. Mountbatten arrived in March 1947. Serious disturbances took place in Punjab and N.W.F.P. which had non-League ministries and the unionist ministry of Punjab resigned. Mountbatten started negotiations with Indian leaders and decided that the timetable laid down about the transfer of power should be streamlined. He came out with his new plan known as the Mountbatten Plan. It was presented before the Indian leaders on 3 June 1947. According to it India was to be divided into two dominions of India and Pakistan and these two were to come into existence on 15 August and Punjab and Bengal were to be divided. Indian Constituent Assembly was to frame Constitution for the Dominion of India or the Indian Union while the Pakistani areas were to have a separate Constituent Assembly. The liabilities and assets were to be divided between the two dominion governments by 15 August 1947. Similarly, members of the central services and army were to opt for respective dominions. The princes were to sign the instrument of accession and join either dominion taking into consideration geographical factors. Excepting Kashmir, Hyderabad and Travancore, all other states had joined either dominion. Most of the states had joined the Indian Union.

Thus on 15 August 1947 India became free and the British troops also withdrew.

Till the new Constitution was framed, the Government of India Act 1935 as amended by the British Parliament was to remain as the constitution of the Indian Union and the Indian Constituent Assembly as the sovereign body. The Indian cabinet was formed on the night of 14-15 August with Jawaharlal Nehru as the Prime Minister. Thus India became free after a long struggle but, unfortunately, it was followed by communal massacres all over the divided Punjab and Delhi, which immensely shocked leaders like Rafi Ahmad.

II

Early Life

RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI was born on 18 February 1894 in a middle-class Zamindar Kidwai family at Masauli in Barabanki district of Uttar Pradesh. His family traced its descent from Qidwatul Ulema Waluddin, that is, the leader of the Ulema and of the faith, Qazi Moizuddin, better known as Qazi Qidwa. He was noted for his scholarship and piety, and was a saint as well as a divine. He came to India towards the end of the 12th century A.D. and settled down at Ayodhya where he lies buried. He held important government posts. His four sons settled down in various villages of Barabanki districts granted as fiefs or Jagirs to Qazi Sahib by the kings. Baragaun, Masauli, Rasauli, Bhayara, Juggaur, Gadia, Mahmudabad and Daryabad were the main centres of Kidwais or the descendants of Qazi Sahib. Masauli—the ancestral home of Rafi Ahmad is after the name of Mastan Shah, a saint and one of the well-known ancestors of Rafi Ahmad and had been founded by him some 750 years ago, according to the District Gazetteer, Barabanki.

Among the most well-known ancestors of Rafi Ahmad was Zaheeruddin alias Gharran Mian, who was Rafi Ahmad's great-grand father. He was the Chakladar of Daryabad during the

regime of the Nawabs of Oudh and had fallen dead in the field while fighting the British while his brother Cheda Mian, equally noted for his handsome figure and gallantry, was blown up at Bhilsar—a village of Barabanki district by putting his hand into an enemy machinegun in an encounter with the British.

Mumtaz Ali was the grand father of Rafi Ahmad and he had two sons—the eldest being Imtiaz Ali alias Lala Mian and younger, Vilayat Ali. Those were the days of national composite culture hence the title Lala Mian shows the affection of both Hindus and Muslims for him. Imtiaz Ali was married at an early age as was the custom in those days, with Rasheedun Nisa, who was the daughter of Farzand Ali, a small Zamindar of Masauli, and was also related to Imtiaz Ali. Rafi Ahmad was born when his father, Imtiaz Ali was only 15 years old.

Imtiaz Ali was an extremely honest person and was noted for his integrity and truthfulness. He always spoke the truth even if in doing so his own interests suffered. In one of the property disputes between some of his relations and his own sons and nephews, the former had summoned him as a witness as they were confident that Imtiaz Ali would tell the truth irrespective of consequences. He attended the court and stated all facts with the result that the decree was given in favour of the other party and his sons and nephews lost the case. Another great quality in him was generosity. He bore the educational and other expenses of the sons of his poor relatives and helped not only a number of his relatives but also a number of other persons. This often involved him in considerable financial difficulties. Rafi Ahmad inherited the great qualities of honesty, generosity and liberalism from his father. His mother was a sincere and accomplished lady. She tried

to promote literacy among the women folk of Masauli. Rafi Ahmad inherited from her strength of character, organisational capacity and consistency of performance. Her husband held her in very high esteem. She died while Rafi Ahmad was still a boy. Imtiaz Ali married a second time much later. This step-mother was a very affectionate and loveable lady and she dearly loved Rafi Ahmad and his brothers—Shafi Ahmad and Mahfuz Ahmad. Rafi Ahmad also loved her and had so much regard for her that he never did anything against her wishes. During his boyhood Rafi Ahmad was put under the charge of Haji Chotak—a wrestler by profession. He was his guide cum friend cum teacher. He was a strict disciplinarian and did not allow Rafi Ahmad to mix or be too much frank with other boys of his age. Being the eldest son of the senior-most member of the family, young Rafi Ahmad was subjected to such severe discipline as his father wanted to ensure that he did not follow the sons of other Zamindars of Masauli who had been spoilt on account of lack of guidance and paternal control. It was mainly due to the isolation of these early formative years that he became very shy and was noted for his modesty. From those days he was also noted for his deep sense of sympathy for others and for self-sacrifice. He participated in games like *Kabaddi* and *Gullidanda*. He never quarrelled with any one. His family servants described him as the most gentle boy in the family who never lost his temper.

Since his father, being a government servant, had to move from one place to another on account of transfers, his uncle Vilayat Ali who was a leading practising lawyer of Barabanki and a lieutenant of Maulana Mohammad Ali, took charge of his education and later took him to Barabanki when he was about 10 years old. Rafi Ahmad matriculated from Government High School, Barabanki in 1913.

Vilayat Ali was among those young radical Muslim political leaders who were deadly opposed to the pro-British loyalist policies of Aligarh or Sir Syed School; advocated Hindu-Muslim unity and stood for closer ties between the Congress and the Muslim League. Chaudhari Khaliquz Zaman, Shoib Qureshi, Raja Ghulam Husain—the brilliant assistant Editor of Mohammad Ali's English Weekly, the *Comrade*, Dr. Naziruddin Hasan who after becoming a judge of Hyderabad High Court had the title of Nazir Yar Jang—all distinguished products of M.A.O. College and Dr. M.A. Ansari—the Congress leader, were his close friends. His house at Barabanki was a rendezvous of all politically conscious persons to discuss current political problems. He had contacts even with revolutionaries and often secret meetings were also held at his residence. He was prominently associated with both the Congress and the Muslim League. There was hardly any political or national movement of importance with which he was not associated. He was a regular contributor to Maulana Mohammad Ali's English weekly the *Comrade*, in which he wrote under the pen name of Bambooq in his intimitable satirical style. On account of his anti-British and nationalist activities and of his close association with Maulana Mohammad Ali, he was being shadowed by the C.I.D. Young Rafi Ahmad imbibed from his illustrious uncle his intense feelings of nationalism, hatred for the British Government, love for the country and a keen interest in politics. He passed the impressionable years of his life with him which moulded his character and future course of life. During these days he was also deeply influenced by Maulana Mohammad Ali.

At school, he was an average student as a whole but was good at Mathematics. His Mathematics teacher loved him for he could solve the most difficult sums easily. He possessed wonder-

ful memory and according to Abdul Ali, his very close relative and class fellow, Rafi Ahmad never felt the necessity of revising the lessons once taught in the class. Although he never topped in his class or won distinction, he never fared badly in any examination. He was noted for his shyness, aloofness, sobriety and due to his quiet nature, had very few friends and was quite indifferent to what happened around him. He never had any quarrel with anyone. In his school days, he had a great liking for chess and spent most of his time at it. While still at school, he regularly went through the issues of *Comrade* which intensified his feelings of nationalism and hatred against the British Government and made him very much politically conscious.

At M.A.O. College Aligarh

AFTER PASSING THE matriculation examination, Rafi Ahmad joined the M.A.O. College at Aligarh in 1916. Through his sincere efforts he was successful in greatly improving the quality of the food at the dining hall and being the senior food monitor he won the admiration of all the fellow students. As he was noted for his active interest in the nationalist movement and for his strong nationalist and anti-British views, his name was included in the black list of 'rebel' and 'dangerous' students by Dr. Ziauddin, the arch pro-British loyalist Principal of M.A.O. College, who did not like the presence of such students in the college and under one pretext or the other expelled them from the college. He had got a number of informers among students whom he paid and these informers used to report to him about the activities of their friends and room-mates, noted for their nationalist and anti-British views. Rafi Ahmad was considered more dangerous as he was looked upon as a revolutionery by the Principal himself who considered his presence in the college highly dangerous to the interests of the Government and of the college. Had Rafi Ahmad not left his studies, he would have been most probably expelled from

the college. He took special interest in the activities of the college union. He neither spoke at the meetings of the union nor did he participate in debates but he earned a name on account of his marvellous organising skill by successfully conducting and organising election campaigns of the college union. Mostly, those candidates won the election who were supported by him. Candidatures of very many had been sponsored by him. He always put up such candidates who were *personae non-grata* with the college authorities but were noted for their nationalist and radical anti-British views. Once he started a no-confidence campaign against an office bearer of the college union, who happened to be an informer of the college authorities. Among his class-mates, hostel fellows and contemporaries at M.A.O. College were Ahmad Mohiuddin of Hyderabad, who later on became a Minister of State in Indian Union Cabinet; Ahad Husain—the India Tennis Player of world fame; Shafiqur Rahman Kidwai of Baragaun—a prominent and very sincere and honest Congress leader of Delhi; Khuda Buksh Sindhi who later on became the Mayor of Karachi Corporation; Mir Akbar Ali Khan, former governor of U.P. and Orissa; Sulaiman Ansari of Gorakhpur, who became the Parliamentary Secretary in the first Congress Ministry of 1937-39; Syed Ahmad, a former M.P. from Madhya Pradesh and Maulvi Obaidur Rehman Khan Sherwani, ex-treasurer of A.M.U. and at present Secretary of All India Muslim Educational Conference. In M.A.O. College Rafi Ahmad received training of being a very successful and efficient conductor of election campaigns and of solving the hostel food problem.

He was not among the toppers in his college but he was generous to a fault as he always helped his friends with the money which he received from his uncle and was always in considerable financial difficulties on account of the generous

financial help which he rendered to his friends. A number of his friends and hostel fellows could appear at their examination only because of him. It was he who cleared their college dues. His high expenses at Aligarh were a surprise to his uncle who frequently received telegrams from his nephew asking for money to enable him to pay the arrears of his college dues otherwise he would not be allowed to appear at his examination. In fact whatever money he received earlier used to be spent on purchasing books for needy friends or in paying the fees of his poor classfellows. But he never disclosed to his uncle the reason of his high expenses despite severe scoldings.

During his college days, he kept himself fully aware of political happenings in the country. Both the Home Rule leaders—Tilak, the idol of the Indian youth and Mrs. Annie Basent had a special appeal for him. When a protest meeting against Mrs. Basent's internment in June 1917 was organised by his uncle at his house in Barabanki, Rafi Ahmad who happened to be at Barabanki at that time, greatly helped him in successfully holding the meeting.

His uncle's death at the early age of 33 in 1918 was the greatest calamity for him. He loved him most, was very much devoted to him and had been deeply influenced by him in practically every sphere. He was so much overwhelmed with grief on this account that he lost all interest in worldly affairs for sometime. The whole burden of looking after his uncle's family which had shifted from Barabanki to Masauli fell on him as his father, being a government servant was posted outside. During his student days at Aligarh he frequently visited Masauli to look after his cousins, loved all of them passionately, always brought gifts for them and looked after all their needs. They

eagerly looked for his next visit—and he looked after their studies and acted as their virtual guardian.

During his student days, both at Barabanki and Aligarh, he was a regular reader of the *Comrade* and the *New Era*—the paper which Raja Ghulam Husain had started from Lucknow after the closure of the *Comrade*. He studied the works of H.G. Wells, Bernard Shaw and Chesterton who were the favourite authors of his illustrious uncle. During his student days a close friend of his uncle, Dr. Naziruddin who had joined the Hyderabad State service had offered a big job to his uncle at Hyderabad, but his uncle had turned down this offer on the ground that he could not put up with restrictions and humiliation of an Indian State job and that he had decided to take active part in the politics and serve the country and the nation. Thereupon another friend of his, Ch. Mohammad Ali, a Taluqadar of Rudauli of high literary tastes had advised him to recommend Rafi Ahmad, who was to graduate that very year, for that job but he replied that what he did not like for himself, he did not like that for his nephew also. This decision of his uncle had deeply influenced Rafi Ahmad to take part in politics.

After passing B.A., he joined LL.B. at Aligarh, but could not complete it because of preoccupation with the Non-Cooperation Movement. Also, he was then married with Majeedun Nisa, who also belonged to Masauli as also to the same ancestry. He joined the Congress and the Khilafat Committees and became one of their most active members and began to visit villages of his district. He had close contacts with many of the Congress and Khilafat leaders most of whom happened to be close friends of his uncle. Not only this, he soon had a band of young, active and devoted workers around him who accompanied him on his tours.

Earlier, even while a student and during the later years of his uncle's life, he was so much impressed by the activities of Gokhale's Servants of India Society that he decided to join it. But his uncle advised him to do so after completing his studies.

Non-Cooperation Movement and Arrest

RAFI AHMAD HAPPENED to be in Barabanki in December 1916 to spend the Christmas holidays with his uncle. This coincided with the historic sessions of the Congress and Muslim League at Lucknow where the famous Congress-League (or Lucknow) Pact was signed. Rafi Ahmad was very keen on attending the Congress session but his father, being a Government servant, was very much reluctant to give him permission as the association of even the son of a Government servant with the Congress was considered objectionable by the Government, according to its latest decision. Ultimately, the intercession of his uncle got the permission for him for attending the Congress Session. The greatest achievement of the Lucknow session was the Lucknow Pact or the agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League over Constitutional reforms, i.e. responsible government, and over communal representation. The agreement was a landmark in the Indian Politics for the fraternization of Hindus and Muslims as well as for the united demand of self government. Unity of action was thus secured between the two major communities and also between the two main organisations which represented the whole of politically conscious British India.

This session as well saw the return of the two warring groups of the Congress—the moderates and the extremists—which was a big triumph for Tilak and Annie Besant. This very much pleased Rafi Ahmad, their ardent admirer. Leaders like Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant—the two Home Rule Leaders, Moti Lal, Gandhiji, Mazharul Haque, Jinnah, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Raja of Mahmudabad attended this session and all these leaders left a deep impression on him. His association with the Congress begins with this eventful year.

As stated earlier, Rafi Ahmad had ever since his student days cherished the passion of serving the country and had thought of joining Gokhale's 'Servants of India Society' to serve the country but on the advice of his uncle that he should join it only after completing his studies had postponed the idea. During the days of the Home Rule Movement, Mrs. Annie Besant, who had started the Home Rule agitation had also made a very deep impression on him and he regularly read her papers : 'The Common weal' and 'New India'.

When the agitation started against the repressive Rowaltt Act, Rafi Ahmad with his group of devoted youngmen from Barabanki and Lucknow whole heartedly joined it and began to visit remote villages of his district. The Government grew alarmed over his activities which were considered dangerous and seditious and a severe warning was administered to Rafi Ahmad's father by the British District Magistrate and Commissioner who pressed him to exert his pressure and stop his son from his seditious activities but his father did not oblige them.

Rafi Ahmad became a regular member of the Congress and the Khilafat Organisations in 1920 and left his studies one month before the commencement of the LL.B. examination in

response to the call for the Non-Cooperation. He had to move on foot to some villages of his district as in those villages even *ekkas* and bullock carts were not available. He formed volunteer corps and the branches of Congress and Khilafat Committee. He was the main force behind the Non-Cooperation Movement in Barabanki district. The special reference to this district by the highest officials as a particularly difficult district was a glowing tribute to Rafi Ahmad's marvellous organising skill in arousing political awakening and zeal in the people of his district. A large number of youngmen enrolled themselves as Congress and Khilafat volunteers. Meetings were held in mosques and bazaars and at different places and people were told regarding the bombardment and desecration of the sacred places of Islam and about the atrocities committed on the Indian people by the police. From 7 to 17 January 1922, he addressed large crowds near the clock tower in Barabanki town exhorting them to join the Non-Cooperation Movement which due to his endeavours was a great success in the district. Foreign cloth was also effectively boycotted in Barabanki and foreign cloth dealers signed pledges not to sell the cloth. Liquor shops were also successfully picketted by volunteers. A women volunteer corps was also organised by certain women members of the Congress and the Khilafat. Schools were also picketted and a number of Government servants, headed by Rafi Ahmad's younger brother Shafi Ahmad Kidwai who was an Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies, resigned their jobs and a number of leading lawyers of Barabanki including his uncle Munshi Nawab Ali, Malik Ali Afzal and Malik Rafi left their practice. The Non-Cooperation Movement was not only successful, it was, in fact, far ahead of other districts of U.P. During those days he attended some of the meetings addressed by Jawaharlal Nehru who made a deep impression on him and he developed a love

for him which developed into close comradeship till his last days.

His younger brother Shafi Ahmad Kidwai after resigning his post of Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies joined the movement. Both the brothers were arrested and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. The arrest and conviction of the two made the position of their father very difficult and insecure and he had to incur the wrath of the Government on account of their 'seditious activities'. He was asked to explain his conduct. Credit must go to him that he was bold enough to tell the District Magistrate that he could not interfere with the activities of his sons. This was really a very bold step and this could have lost him his job but his immediate British officers vehemently opposed it as he was considered to be an exceptionally honest and hard working officer.

On account of his extreme shyness, Rafi Ahmad could not take bath in the open as was done by other prisoners and he went without bath for about a fortnight. This created a problem for Lucknow Jail authorities who were much moved and got raised a temporary structure to enable him to take his bath. The most remarkable trait of his character was that he never made any request for cigarettes or edibles in the jail.

Among those who were in Lucknow Jail with him were Pt. Motilal Nehru, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahadev Desai, Dev Das Gandhi, Ch. Khaliquzzaman, Mohan Lal Nehru, Shyam Lal Nehru, Pt. Sunder Lal, Babu Purushottam Das Tandon, Yusuf Iman of Mirzapur, George Joseph, Mohan Lal Saksena, Dr. Jawahar Lal, Govind Malaviya, Krishan Kant Malaviya, Keshav Dev Malaviya, Kapil Dev Malaviya, the famous Urdu poet Firaq Gorakhpuri, Bal Krishan Kaul of Ajmer, Swami Shah Jehan Nand Saraswati of Bihar, Dr. Murari

Lal, Babu Ganpat Sahai, Badaruzzaman—Ch. Khaliquzzaman's nephew, Saeedur Rehman Kidwai, Maulana Salamatullah of Firangi Mahal, Seetla Sahai, Ch. Raghubir Narain Singh, Bal Mukand Bajpai and Dr. Laxmi Sahai Saksena of Lucknow. With all these persons he maintained cordial relations till the last. In the Jail he developed close personal contacts with Pt. Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal and other members of the Nehru Family.

His close association with Nehrus and his other comrades in jail gave him a deep insight into Indian politics and helped him in fully understanding the politics. When the proposed Civil Disobedience Movement which was to start from Bardoli in Gujarat had been suspended by Gandhiji on account of Chauri Chaura incident, Rafi Ahmad alongwith many other Congress leaders in Lucknow Jail was very much grieved. He shared Pandit Motilal Nehru's view that this was not a correct decision and that it would go to demoralise the rank and file of the Congress. He also fully agreed with Panditji that the Congress should enter Legislatures and the deadlocks would compel the Viceroy and the Governors to use their emergency powers and thus expose the true nature of the mock parliamentary government which had been introduced in India by the Government of India Act, 1919. He was also very much grieved over the ever growing gulf between Hindus and Muslims and the occurrence of communal riots in the country. He was among those who had put up a fight against communalist leaders and was not prepared to compromise with them in any way and considered communalism as the greatest danger to the country. He could foresee its most harmful and dangerous consequences. He very strongly felt that it was the first and foremost duty of Congressmen to fight communalism and work incessantly for Hindu-Muslim Unity.

He was strongly of the view that in the Congress organisation there should not be any place for those who did not believe in Hindu-Muslim Unity or who were in any way connected with communal activities. He was among those Congressmen who were not in any way disheartened or had in any way been demoralised by the collapse of the Non-Cooperation Movement and held steady to the goals of complete independence and Hindu-Muslim Unity and worked with greater determination for the achievements of these goals. He was very much pained over the somersault of those Congressmen, both Hindus and Muslims, who had switched over to communal politics and was very much agitated over the rise in popularity of communalist cum loyalist leaders of both the communities who had been totally eclipsed during the great Non-Cooperation Movement.

After his arrest, the police raided his house at Masauli, made a thorough search and auctioned the property of his father who had to suffer considerable financial loss on this account. Other members of his family were shadowed by the police and the C.I.D. Therefore, after his release in 1922, Rafi Ahmad decided to live somewhere else to save his father from further embarrassment. He had applied for the post of the Assistant Superintendent of Terminal Tax in Lucknow Municipal Board which in those days was under the control of Swarajists or the legislative wing of the Congress but he was not selected. When Pt. Motilal came to know of it, he asked Ch. Khaliquzzaman, the Chairman of the Lucknow Municipal Board, to send him to Allahabad and put him in charge of the Office of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee which in those days was located at Allahabad. He thus got the chance of not only running the Congress organisation but also of coming into closer contact with Pt. Motilal who was so much impressed by his efficiency,

effectiveness, energy, resourcefulness and organising ability that he got him elected as one of the Secretaries of U.P. Congress in 1925—the position he held continuously for nine years. Pt. Motilal was so much impressed by him that he appointed him as his Private Secretary and he discharged his duties to the complete satisfaction of the great Pandit and he became his close confidant and enjoyed his affection. From this began his very close association with the Nehru family to which his loyalty was never shaken. His love for Jawaharlal Nehru was next to his love for the country. He had great respect for the elder Nehru and great regard for Kamala Nehru—Jawaharlal Nehru's wife. He was greatly impressed by her sincerity and simplicity. As a Private Secretary to Pandit Motilal, he saw things at close quarters which were of great significance to him. He came into contact with practically all the leading political personalities and had close contacts with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and many other Congress and non-Congress leaders and this very much widened his political understanding. It was during this movement that he became fully conversant with the problems of ordinary Congress workers and was all praise for their sincerity, sacrifice, zeal and devotion. All the time he fully realized the great hardship to which their families were put to because of their poverty and as also because of the repressive policy of the Government. As such he always made a point to arrange for the financial assistance of their families during the period they were in jails.

The Hindu-Muslim differences increased after the collapse of the Non-Cooperation Movement because some Hindu leaders distrusted Muslims' honesty. They believed that Swaraj meant Muslim Raj. They believed that Muslims of India would support Muslim powers to build up a Muslim empire in India. Some of them cast aspersions on Muslims that they had actually

invited the Amir of Afghanistan to invade India in 1919. Quite a few papers wrote a series of articles adducing evidence in support of this contention while Muslims feared that Hindus being in overwhelming majority would smother them and there would be a Hindu Raj after the British rule. This fear of the Hindu majority was first roused by the British mentor, Sir Syed and reiterated by the communalist Muslim leaders on numerous occasions. In order to remove this misgiving guarantees of various kinds had been proposed in the scheme of Indian constitution prepared by the Congress and the League for security and protection of Muslims and other minorities.

Gandhiji pursued the idea of the federal unity of the two communities with passionate zeal. During the days of non-cooperation hopes of Hindu-Muslim Unity ran high. But the Moplah rebellion of August 1921 in which atrocities were committed on Hindus and they were forcibly converted to Islam, gave a jolt to Hindu-Muslim Unity.

Some Hindu leaders who were not free from communalism looked with alarm at the free mixing of Hindus and Muslims in Jails. They, especially Swami Shraddhanand disapproved of their inter-dining in jails. They were obsessed with the danger that Hindus would be dominated by Muslims. So, soon after his release, the Swami started the *Shuddhi* movement. These Hindu leaders had become sceptical and suspicious of their Muslim comrades.

The communalist leaders of both the communities who happened to be ultra-loyalist and were deadly opposed to the Non-Cooperation Movement and had been completely eclipsed by the great movement, now took full advantage of the prevailing situation and became popular overnight by arousing

communal sentiments and by championing communal issues. As they also had the additional advantage of getting the official patronage, whenever communal riots started either over the music before the mosques or over the *Moharram* procession or over the news of cow-slaughter during *Baqr Id*, they always came out to aggravate the situation. Taking full advantage of the communal animosity in the elections to legislatures and local bodies they had no difficulty in winning election by arousing communal passions. The British Government fully patronised such persons and projected them as leaders of their respective communities.

In Central Legislative Assembly

RAFI AHMAD JOINED the 'changers' camp of the Congressmen led by Pt. Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das which were in favour of capturing legislatures, not to co-operate with the Government but to create obstructions and deadlocks which could compel the Viceroy and the Governors to use their emergency powers and thus expose the true nature of the mock parliamentary form of government that had been introduced in India, as stated earlier. This was to press the national demand for legislatures. If the Government conceded the demand, a great victory would be won. If on the other hand the Government refused, it would raise the spirit of the people and create new enthusiasm both inside the legislature and outside. Rafi Ahmad was strongly of the view that instead of boycotting of legislatures Congressmen should, after capturing elected seats, carry on a policy of uniform, continuous and constant opposition and obstruction to the government as this would prevent demoralisation among Congressmen.

In the years preceding and following the formation of the Swaraj Party under the leadership of Motilal Nehru and C.R.

Das, Rafi Ahmad did a lot of hard work. He accompanied Motilal in his hurricane tour of north India to apprise Congressmen about the aims and objectives of the Swaraj Party. This was mainly due to the vigorous efforts of Motilal and his energetic secretary that the All-India Swarajist Conference was held in Allahabad at which the constitution of the party and the plan of its election campaign was drawn up. It was due to the tireless efforts of Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das and other leaders of the Swaraj Party, including Rafi Ahmad, that by the middle of 1923, the Congress Working Committee which had a majority of 'no changers' in it could no longer enjoy the support of the majority of the All-India Congress Committee and had, therefore, to resign. This happened on account of a great deal of manoeuvres, lobbying, intense propaganda and canvassing and manipulation of votes and Rafi Ahmad with his leader and mentor, Motilal Nehru played a notable role in achieving this marvellous result with his unrivalled organising skill. It was at that time that he learnt the great art of dislodging and disarming his opponents which he often used during his later political career with remarkable success. Later on, at the special session of the Congress held in Delhi under the presidentship of Maulana Azad, it was through his and Maulana Mohammad Ali's efforts that a compromise between the Swarajists or the 'changers' and the 'no changers' was arrived at and Congressmen were permitted to participate in the forthcoming election of central and provincial legislatures and carry on a uniform, continuous and consistent fight against the Government within legislatures. This was also a great victory for the Swarajists. After this, the Swarajists started their election campaign. They were, however, greatly handicapped by dissensions within the Congress and the growing Hindu-Muslim antagonism. They had only a few weeks at their disposal—less than two months to prepare for elections

but despite these heavy odds, they gave a good account of themselves. Motilal's election campaign at the age of 62 was startling. He travelled incessantly by road and rail, addressing endless chain of meetings till late at night. In Bengal, C.R. Das made an extensive tour of Bengal and worked day and night for the success of the Swarajist candidates. The performance of the Swaraj Party, at the polls was impressive. In the Central Assembly it won 45 out of 101 elected seats, while in the C.P. Legislative Council it commanded an absolute majority. In Bengal Legislative Council, it came out as the largest single party while in U.P. Council it was the second largest party. Rafi Ahmad did not agree to contest the election to the Central Assembly and passed on the nomination, offered to him by Pt. Motilal, to one of his friends. But he had much to do in the resounding success of the party. The success of the party was due to its efficient electioneering machinery of which he was the chief organiser. During these election days, once his father happened to go through Motilal's letter to Rafi Ahmad which was just like a letter from a father to his son or from a teacher to his favourite student in which he not only gave him a number of instructions but sought his opinion on a number of matters. This delighted his father and convinced him that Rafi Ahmad was held in high esteem by the great national leader, Motilal.

He played a more important role in the election to local bodies in U.P. in which Swarajists won a large number of seats and even commanded a majority in a number of Municipal and District Boards. He made a deep impression of his marvellous organising ability on all those Congress workers who came into contact with him during electioneering. He also shouldered still heavier responsibilities. The sudden death of C.R. Das left Pt. Motilal not only as the sole leader of the Swaraj Party—the

Parliamentary wing of the Congress, but also of the Congress organisation as Gandhiji had retired from active politics and had devoted himself exclusively to the Khadi campaign. Motilal Nehru was now to be the in-charge of the political campaign. So with his leader, Rafi Ahmad had to bear the major burden which increased manifold when serious differences in the Swaraj party led to the secession of the Maharashtrian group which under the leadership of M.R. Jayakar and N.C. Kelkar had formed the Responsive Co-operation party, thus greatly weakening the Swaraj Party.

He was one of the Secretaries of the reception committee of the Kanpur session of the Congress held in December 1925. As at this session the Swarajist ideology of entering legislatures was approved by the Congress, Rafi Ahmad had to do a lot in this connection. Motilal Nehru got him elected as one of the secretaries of U.P. Provincial Congress Committee and he continued to hold this office continuously for nine years.

Mainly through the efforts of Motilal Nehru, a national demand which represented the greatest common measure of agreement among the non-official members of the Central Assembly on the immediate grant of Dominion Status and the establishment of responsible government was put forward but the Government turned it down. So Motilal Nehru and all Swarajist members of the Central Assembly withdrew from the assembly in March 1926. Rafi Ahmad had to do a lot of lobbying and succeeded in his efforts in securing the support of a number of non-official members of the assembly for the national demand.

In 1925, Rafi Ahmad had to face a great personal calamity. His only son whom he loved dearly died at the age of seven. This was a terrible shock both to Rafi Ahmad and

his wife. Outwardly he kept up calm appearances but inwardly his heart bled. For years, he kept weeping at night. He absorbed himself completely in the service of the country and relief to the poor became his mission of life while his wife devoted to religious pursuits. He sent her for performing the Haj.

In the elections of 1926, the Swaraj Party had to face stiff opposition from Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya's newly formed Congress Nationalist Party in Northern India and Responsive Co-operators in Western and Central India. Hindu-Muslim relations had deteriorated further and had adversely affected Swaraj Party and the communal tide swept away many of its old colleagues and trusted workers. Vulgar and vehement communal propaganda was carried on against it. Motilal was accused of being anti-Hindu and of plotting to legislate cow slaughter. Despite all these heavy odds, the Swaraj Party secured 38 seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and it was still the largest party in the country's legislatures. Rafi Ahmad was elected to the Central Assembly from Oudh Muslim constituency and he was appointed as the Chief Whip of the Swaraj Party. After the election of 1926, the political kaleidoscope had violently shifted. The Swaraj Party had suffered a deep schism. Now tortuous intrigues in the party came to light early in 1927 when some of the members with surreptitious backing of some of its senior leaders revolted but it was put down through Rafi Ahmad's efforts. His most important function was to keep his leader—Motilal fully posted with machinations of those Swarajist members who were intensely jealous of him. Rafi Ahmad not only kept Panditji fully informed of the activities of these persons but also foiled many of their plots and from his intimate knowledge of his party members, he continuously gave Motilal Nehru the 'low down' of some

members of his party and some of those were thoroughly exposed later on by deserting the Congress by not joining the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. He soon acquainted himself thoroughly with the proceedings of the assembly and made his mark in the Central Assembly in the capacity of the Chief Whip of the party. The party with its numerical strength and even together with Pt. Malaviya's Nationalist Party could not defeat the Government and therefore there was always the need to secure some uncommitted votes to defeat the Government. In this difficult task Rafi Ahmad's capacity for manipulations and man-management played a great part. It is indeed a tribute to him that on many occasions he was able to muster a majority of votes to get passed the adjournment motions tabled by his party. His greatest hour as the Chief Whip came in 1928 when he succeeded in managing to get a majority of votes to reject an important provision relating to the raising of salt duty in the Finance Bill. Another notable achievement of his in this connection was that he succeeded in mustering votes against the highly repressive Public Safety Bill which had been rejected by the casting vote of the President. He did all these manipulations from his Delhi residence at Daryaganj which had been named by Dr. Ansari as a *Sarai* where a number of Swarajist Muslim members like Shafi Daudi—one of the former presidents of the All-India Khilafat Committee, Syed Murtaza Bahadur—another Khilafat leader from Madras, Yusuf Imam—veteran Congress leader of U.P. and Abdul Matin Chaudhari of Assam—one of Jinnah's principal lieutenants through whom he manipulated the uncertain Muslim votes, lived with him. In addition to this it was swarmed with members of assembly from Bihar, Bengal, Madras and U.P. who all used to put up with him as guests and a good number of his guests and relatives who often came to Delhi for sight-seeing. Besides, a stream of visitors

called on him daily. Whenever he went to Delhi to attend the assembly session, he took with him the best cook alongwith utensils and crockery atleast for 50 persons as during his stay in Delhi, a large number of persons dined with him daily.

His tactical operation of scoring victories over Government by manipulating uncertain votes was both exciting and amusing and even at times nominated members followed his advice and this was very much embarrassing to the Government as the then Home Member and Finance Member of Government of India felt very much perturbed because of Rafi Ahmad's manipulation. This had further enhanced his position in the party and by 1929 he was elected as the Secretary of the Swaraj Party in the Assembly. Sir Basil Blackett, the then Finance Minister, complained to Pt. Motilal that Rafi Ahmad had misled the members by giving them incorrect information. Rafi Ahmad felt annoyed and he retorted by producing correct figures and convincingly proved that the statistics of the Finance Minister were quite wrong.

Rafi Ahmad had a record of remaining 'speechless' in the Central Assembly during his three years term of membership as the Indian Hansard makes little reference of his speeches. He put questions about matters of public importance. His questions had a peculiarity of their own and were always embarrassing to the treasury benches since they used to be about the welfare of the man in the street. He was much interested in the affairs of Oudh and Rohil Khand Railways and the employment and transfer of its staff greatly agitated his mind and he put a series of questions about these matters. The cancellation of the Passport to Saklatwala—the well-known Indian communist member of the British House of Commons who was to visit India in December 1926, also formed a subject of his questions.

He severely criticised the callous attitude of the Government towards Indian residents of South Africa, who had been repatriated from there and expressed his deep concern over their welfare and elicited information about the help granted to them. He also pleaded the case of town inspectors of post offices of Bombay and U.P.—many of whom had been retrenched. He also put questions about the number of Indian officers holding King's Commission in the Indian Army, their seniority, promotion and pay scales. He also tabled a number of questions and supplementary questions about the reported help to the members of the Central Committee i.e. Committee consisting of members of Central Legislature which was to help the Simon Commission; the rates paid by the Government to a transport company for the carriage of fruits from Kulu to Pathankot; about matters relating to East Bengal Railway; some of the railway accidents and about provision of living quarters for clerks of the post offices of Kishanganj and Islampur. He was specially interested in the percentage of Indians in the superior services in the commercial and transport department of the railways and this was very much embarrassing to the Government. His supplementary questions, penetrating and sharp, also proved to be much annoying to the Government.

Among his contemporaries in the Assembly were such distinguished personages as Pt. Motilal Nehru, Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, M.A. Jinnah, Lala Lajpat Rai, Srinivas Aiyangar, Vithal Bhai Patel—the president of the Assembly, Shanmukham Chetty, Fazli Husain, V. V. Giri, Shafi Daudi, T.C. Goswami, Dewan Chaman Lal, C.S. Ranga Iyer, T.A.K. Sherwani, Sir Purushottam Das Thakur Das, M.S. Aney etc. In the words of his contemporaries in the Central Assembly : “Seldom did Rafi Sahib make any speech though he was the Chief Whip of the Swaraj Party. He was, however, seen busy

all the time in friendly chats with groups of members, who always surrounded him. He was very humorous and always cracking jokes. He would make fun of all those who spoke bad English during their speeches or used wrong idioms. In the Assembly Hall, he could be seen moving from seat to seat, smiling and joking, shaking hands with one, hugging another close to his bosom, putting his arms around the shoulders of the next and so on.” During Motilal Nehru’s presidentship of the Congress, he was entrusted with the special mission of conducting election of Rajputana Provincial Congress Committee, which had always been challenged by petitions by the defeated group. But Rafi Ahmad conducted these elections in 1929 in such a fine manner that both the warring groups were satisfied and no petition was filed.

As stated earlier, his most important function in those days was to keep his leader—Motilal Nehru fully informed of the intentions of these prominent leaders of the Swaraj Party who were intensely jealous of him and also about some of very able and talented parliamentarians and star stage-performers of the party who were vulnerable to temptation and on which account Rafi Ahmad mistrusted them. His intuitive judgement of some star stage-performers of the party whom he intensely mistrusted proved right when they did not join the Salt Satyagraha or the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. Some of them never rejoined the Congress. One of them was knighted for the services rendered by him for the Government while another became a staunch champion of the rights and interests of the landed aristocracy while a third who had once occupied a very important position in the Congress hierarchy kept himself quite aloof from the national movement till his death.

Rafi Ahmad resigned from the Assembly in January 1930 in response to the resolution of the Congress Working Committee before the commencement of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 alongwith 27 other members of the Swaraj Party, although he was not in favour of the decision. He was for constitutional obstruction in the Legislature coupled with mass action and he expressed his views in a public statement. According to him : "Legislatures could be a tremendous vehicle of anti-British propaganda with immunities they provided to the militants." The significant episode was his characteristic courage to declare dissent from the most powerful leaders of the Congress.

Role in Muslim Politics (1923-31)

THE COLLAPSE OF the Non-Cooperation Movement was followed by the out-break of a series of unfortunate Hindu-Muslim riots in different parts of the country, especially in northern India. Harmony between the two communities was completely shattered. Reactionaries and loyalist communalist leaders of both the communities who had been eclipsed during the years of the great Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements, became most active and began fanning the fire of communal animosity and hatred. These leaders posed to be the guardians of their respective communities and great champions of their rights but actually they served the interests of the imperialist Government. Still more unfortunate was the fact that a number of Hindu and Muslim leaders left the Congress and switched over to communal policies and, instead of fighting for national independence, began spearheading communalist movements, preaching communal hatred. The growing antagonism between Hindus and Muslims and the frequent communal riots very much helped these communalist leaders in winning elections of legislatures and local bodies and the Swaraj Party—the parliamentary wing of the Congress, suffered defeat at their hands and in the elections of 1926,

while these leaders were more successful. The growing Hindu-Muslim differences and conflicts and the widespread communal riots greatly weakened the Congress and the national movement and intensely disturbed Gandhiji when he was released in February 1924. He felt that if this evil was not nipped in the bud, it would soon grow into a national calamity. He therefore, resorted to a 21-day fast in September 1924 with the object of appealing to the hearts of Hindus and Muslims to arrest the deepening deterioration in communal situation by putting a stop to the fratricidal conflict. A unity conference was held in Delhi to discuss measures of bringing about an atmosphere of goodwill. It was followed by an All-Parties Conference convened by Maulana Mohammad Ali—the then Congress President at Bombay which appointed a sub-committee of 15 representatives of all political parties to draw up a scheme of Swaraj, including the communal rapprochement. A formula for promoting Hindu-Muslim unity was also devised. As a result of these efforts made by the leaders of the two communities, Hindu-Muslim riots ceased for the time being but after some time erupted again. At the Gauhati Session of the Congress, a resolution was passed which called upon the Congress Working Committee to take immediate steps in consultation with the leaders of both the communities for the removal of severe tension between the two communities and to submit a report to A.I.C.C.. Mr. Srinivas Aiyangar—the then Congress President had meetings with a number of Hindu and Muslim leaders. Mr. Jinnah welcomed this idea and it was at that time that “Rafi Ahmad with his back-room operation had nearly succeeded in finding combined solution on the basis of joint electorate. In the Spring of 1927, at his house in Daryaganj, Muslim leaders of all shades of opinion including the Ali Brothers met for dinner and thrashed out the solution of a Hindu-Muslim settlement in the future constitution. It

gave Muslims a fair share in the Government of future India by providing for them statutory majority in the Punjab and Bengal legislatures, the separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency and the elevation of N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan as the other Muslim majority provinces and one-third representation in the Central Legislature. In return of these concessions, Muslims were to give up their demand for separate electorate in favour of joint electorate. Weightage was also to be granted in legislature of both the Hindu and Muslim majority provinces in equal proportion. Unfortunately, this great achievement of his is little known. This settlement was approved by a representative meeting of Muslim leaders and legislators belonging to different parties, held in Delhi on 20 March 1927 under the presidentship of Mr. Jinnah. These proposals or Delhi Proposals as these were popularly known, were subsequently agreed upon by the Congress and the All Parties Conference was held in Delhi in February 1928. Unfortunately, the Delhi entente was sabotaged by some communal and narrow minded Hindu and Sikh leaders. Thus a great opportunity was lost and Rafi Ahmad was very much shocked by this development. The national political scene would have been quite different had the Delhi settlement not been sabotaged.

While Indian nationalist leaders were engaged in the important task of establishing peace and unity between Hindus and Muslims, the British Government were examining lines on which future constitutional reforms could be introduced in India. Lord Irwin who had succeeded Lord Reading as the new Viceroy felt that a new constitution was necessary for India and for this, unity between Hindus and Muslims was essential. He, therefore, appealed to the two communities to give up the violence in which they off and on indulged. It was followed by Lord Birkenhead, the then Secretary of State of India's

decision to antedate the appointment of the Statutory Commission which was to enquire into the working of the system of government, the growth of education and the development of representative institutions in British India and to report as to what extent it was desirable to establish the principle of responsible government or to extend, modify or restrict the degree of responsible government then existing therein.

The main reason for the appointment of the Commission was that the general elections in Great Britain were due to be held in 1929 and the victory of the Labour Party was foreseen and the Conservatives did not like the Labour Government to handle the appointment of the said Commission. They were not prepared to take the slightest risk in this matter. But no Indian was included in this Statutory Commission, headed by Sir John Simon. The Secretary of State for India justified exclusion of Indians on the ground that if there would be two or three Indian members of the Commission, they would not be the true representatives of the Indian Opinion and if all the groups were provided representation, the Commission would become an unmanageable body. He further justified their exclusion on the ground that as the main function of the Commission was to judge the success of constitutional reforms in India and the ability of Indians to be entrusted with further responsibility, it would not be advisable to associate Indians with this work. He also felt that in a large body the prospects of an agreed report would be infinitely remote. The terms of reference of the Commission were also unsatisfactory from the Indian point of view. The Congress therefore, decided to boycott the commission. The 'all white' complexion of the Commission alienated sympathy of Indian moderates and other Indian political parties. With the exception of a section of the Muslim League which consisted of reactionary and British

Loyalist Muslim communalists and extreme conservatives, and big landlords and Indian princes, the entire country strongly opposed the Commission and the terms of its reference. No act of the British since the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy had received such a wholesale condemnation.

Lord Birkenhead while justifying the exclusion of Indians from the Commission challenged Indians to produce an agreed constitution and submit the same to the British Parliament for consideration. This challenge was accepted by the Congress and an All-Parties Conference was convened at Bombay in May 1929. It appointed a committee consisting of Motilal Nehru, as Chairman, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Ali Imam, Shoib Qureshi—the young Muslim Khilafatist leader, Subhas Chandra Bose—the leader of radical Congressmen who with Jawaharlal Nehru stood for complete independence of the country, M.S. Aney, M.R. Jayakar—the responsive co-operation leader, N.M. Joshi—a trade Union leader of moderate views, Mangal Singh—a Congress Sikh leader and Pradhan as members to draft the constitution. The committee after taking advice from a number of eminent persons and representatives of communal bodies and holding 25 sittings submitted its reports to the All-Parties Conference, held in Lucknow during the last week of August 1928. During this period, that is, during the sittings of committee, Rafi Ahmad crossed the Is and Ts of the report which had been written by Jawaharlal Nehru and he was also put incharge of the printing and circulation of the report. The conference set its seal of approval on it. The Nehru report as it was popularly known was finally adopted at the All Parties National Convention, held in Calcutta from 28 December 1928 to 1 January 1929. The convention represented political India in miniature and was attended by the most important leaders of different political parties and the

most distinguished public men of India. The principal recommendations of the committee were as follows :

- (1) The Political status of India was to be the same as of the other British dominions.
- (2) Fundamental rights were provided in the constitution. Among them were freedom of conscience, profession and practice of religion.
- (3) Members of the central and provincial legislatures were to be elected by joint electorate and there was to be reservation of seats for Muslims in the central legislature and in provincial legislatures in which they were in a minority and there was to be a similar reservation for Hindus in N.W.F.P.
- (4) Sindh was to be separated from the Bombay presidency.
- (5) N.W.F.P. was to have the same form of government as in other provinces.

Unfortunately, the convention was a failure on account of communal bickerings. Jinnah's amendments demanding safeguard for the Muslim minority were rejected and Maulana Mohammad Ali was hooted down when he moved his amendment demanding complete independence instead of Dominion Status. This shabby treatment meted out to him led to his parting of company with the Congress and alongwith him a number of other popular Muslim Leaders.

Thus a considerable section of Muslims was opposed to Nehru report and this went to weaken the Congress among Muslims.

Rafi Ahmad was appointed as the Secretary of the All-Parties National Convention and he published a brochure on the proceedings of the convention to which he wrote an introduction. This was the brief document dealing with India's constitutional and communal problems and this shows his grasp over these problems. According to him the main object of the convention was to ascertain the opinion of various political parties in the country on the principle underlying the constitution drawn up by the Nehru Committee and he summed up the discussion under the heads : 'The Constituent Status of India, Fundamental Rights and the Indian States'. He dwelt at length with the Muslim problem and said that the principle of communal solution proposed by the Nehru Report and accepted by the convention had received the support of a large majority of the two premier Muslim organisations—the Muslim League and the Central Khilafat Committee. The Muslim opponents of the Nehru Report claimed that they represented the Muslim opinion in the country. The sure test of their claims was a general election on the sole issue of the Report. While the supporters of the Report had unanimously protested against the postponement of general election by the Viceroy and the Governors of various provinces, the opponents of the Report had received the postponement with extreme satisfaction, verging on gratefulness to the Government. The reason was obvious. They were afraid of going to the people. He then summarised the main recommendations of the Report which had been approved by the convention namely, the same constitutional status for India as enjoyed by other British Dominions, the solution of the communal problem by adopting the all important solution by reaching agreement on Fundamental Rights of citizenship, universal adult franchise, abolition of separate electorate and the convening of a conference to decide

the constitutional status and position of Indian states in the future commonwealth for India.

After the convention, Rafi Ahmad's main task was to mobilise support for the Nehru Report. For this he galvanised into activity nationalist Muslims. He strongly believed that the Joint electorate was essential for the survival of Muslims in India as this alone could effectively check Hindu communalism. The necessity for a Hindu candidate to seek Muslim votes would thwart the rise of rank Hindu communalists. According to him, with joint electorate the basic qualities of the Muslim character—their courage, their human warmth and hospitality, their comparative indifference to money and material craze for future would give Muslims an honourable place in India. He was convinced that the joint electorate would end communal antagonism and would lead to Hindu-Muslim unity.

He organised a number of meetings in support of the Nehru Report and carried on sustained propaganda in its favour through a number of Urdu papers some of whom had been supported financially by him. He had to face very stiff and bitter opposition of Muslim communalists who denounced him as the stooge of Motilal Nehru, a paid agent of the Congress and 'Qaum Farosh'. Unfortunately, the tide of Muslim opinion ran strongly against the Nehru Report and the campaign to win the Muslims for the Nehru Report did not succeed largely because of its denunciation by the Ali Brothers who were still the most popular Muslims leaders. The rigid approach shown by some Hindu communalist leaders at the national convention was largely responsible for this reaction and alienation of Muslims. The British Government faced with the threat of Congress Civil Disobedience Movement intensified their old game of 'divide and rule' with all the tact and power at their

command and began to patronize the newly formed All-India Muslim Conference—the organisation of communalist cum loyalist Muslims under the presidentship of the Agha Khan, which had the patronage of some Indian Muslim princes as well.

Rafi Ahmad took a leading part in organising the All-India Muslim Nationalist Party which was formed to fight communalism and forces of reaction. He issued a strong appeal to nationalist Muslim workers all over the country through a circular to attend the All India Muslim Nationalist Conference which was held at Allahabad on 27 July 1929 under the presidentship of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. In response to his appeal a number of nationalist Muslims from different parts of the country attended it. The aims and objects of the party were to promote among Muslims of India the spirit of nationalism and to develop among them the concept to rise above communalism and to imbibe in them greater confidence towards Indian nationalistic ideals, to induce the Muslims to have the proper share in national struggle and to create such relations between the majority and minority communities as would lead the former to consider the right of minorities in a spirit of broad-minded patriotism and the latter in that of true nationalism.

Rafi Ahmad continued to be a member of All-India Muslim League Council. During his membership he always took a leading part in fighting against reactionary and loyalist elements and tried to purge it of these elements. Some times his manoeuvres succeeded. In February 1930, Dr. Ansari entrusted him with the task to dominate the All India Muslim League Council and the two often made moves for it till they severed their connection with it.

During the period between Gandhi-Irwin Pact and Civil Disobedience Movement of 1932, he was principally occupied in mobilising nationalist Muslim opinion as counter-weight to Muslim communalism which the British Government had been patronising and using vigorously to oppose the nationalist demands for self government at the Round Table Conference. An All-Muslim Nationalist Conference was held in Lucknow in April 1931 under the presidentship of Sir Ali Imam. Rafi Ahmad was elected as one of the party secretaries. For sometime the party remained active and its provincial conferences, held in U.P. and Bengal, were quite successful. Unfortunately, the party could not work effectively due to lack of rapport among the office bearers. The party had no central office and organisation. Rafi Ahmad was much disheartened on this account. To him it was a great tragedy that a party which had among its members a large number of such persons who had made a name by making tremendous sacrifices for the national cause and who had suffered a lot on that account should have met with such a fate. However, he continued his personal contacts with nationalist Muslim comrades all over the country who always valued his opinion, sought his help in their problems and responded to his call.

Rafi Ahmad and Civil Disobedience Movement

THE DECLARATION OF the Dominion Status as the goal of the Congress was vehemently opposed by the young and radical Congressmen led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. It was largely due to them that at the Lahore Session of the Congress, held in December 1929 the resolution changing the Congress creed to complete independence was adopted and the All-India Congress Committee was authorised to launch a programme of civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes to achieve its goal of complete independence. The failure of the British Government to accept Gandhiji's eleven demands and to give assurance regarding the grant of full-fledged responsible government, left no other option to Gandhiji but to start the Civil Disobedience Movement. The movement started in the form of Salt Satyagraha and later on other laws were also disobeyed.

The Congress Working Committee called upon all the Congress legislators, central as well as provincial, to resign from legislatures and this was done by the majority and by February 1930, 172 Congress legislators resigned. Rafi Ahmad was though among the 28 Congress members of the Central

Assembly who resigned yet he was not in favour of this decision. He stood for a combination of constitutional obstruction with mass direct action against the Government. He felt that legislatures could be tremendously effective vehicles for anti-British platforms with all sorts of immunities which its members enjoyed. He said all this in a press brief and this statement showed his characteristic courage to declare his dissent against the decision of the most eminent Congress leaders. But as a disciplined solidier of the Congress he complied with the decision of the Congress Working Committee.

The country was set ablaze from end to end and the Salt Satyagraha was started from 6 April. Salt was made publicly by Congressmen which was followed by mass arrests and public demonstrations. The Government came down with a heavy hand and highly repressive measures were adopted by it. The Congress and its branches were declared unlawful bodies. Its offices were raided and its accounts frozen. Excessive physical force was also used to suppress the movement. Clashes between the police and the public led to lathi charges and firing. At Peshawar, the military firing resulted in the death of hundreds but these measures could not suppress the movement. U.P. did not lag behind in this movement and thousands of Congressmen were arrested. Boycotting of foreign cloth and picketing of liquor shops were vigorously pursued.

As one of the secretaries of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee, Rafi Ahmad from the very beginning was very keen that the Civil Disobedience Movement should move to villages in the form of 'no-rent' campaign which could be joined by the peasantry which had been hard hit by the steep fall in prices of agricultural commodities.

It was rather a strange coincidence that Sir Malcom Hailey, the then Governor of U.P. and one of the ablest British

administrators had also apprehended that the Civil Disobedience Movement in U.P. would move to villages in the form of 'no-rent' campaign and it would be welcomed by the peasantry. This fear of Hailey was the cherished hope of Rafi Ahmad for his province had the most oppressed peasantry in India. While other Congress leaders participated in the Salt Satyagraha in a ritualistic manner, Rafi Ahmad took the permission of Motilal Nehru to organise a 'no-rent' campaign among the peasants of Rae Bareilly which had been the stumping ground during the Non-Cooperation Movement of Jawaharlal Nehru who was more interested in raising the peasantry. This showed how Jawaharlal Nehru and Rafi Ahmad's thoughts moved abreast.

After getting the permission of Motilal, Rafi Ahmad moved to Rae Bareilly. In organising the 'no-rent' campaign his obscurity proved to be an asset as during the 10 years of his political life he had purposely avoided the camera. The police, therefore, had considerable difficulty in linking his name with his person and this gave him the necessary cover to organise the 'no-rent' campaign. He adopted queer ways in conducting the 'no-rent' campaign. For instance, he lived for one whole month in the waiting room of Rae Bareilly railway station buying and returning tickets as though he was a passenger in transit. The campaign spread like wild fire in the whole district and was checked only after many arrests and lathi charges. Rafi Ahmad practically visited all the villages of the district, addressed numerous meetings and explained to the people the aims and objects of the campaign. His speeches aroused great enthusiasm among the Kisans for the liberation of the country. With his wonderful planning skill he organised the whole campaign single-handed. This was one of his splendid achievements and enhanced his position. An order under

Section 144 was served on him restraining his activities. He defied the order and was arrested in June 1930 and sentenced to six months, but before his arrest he had completed all the necessary arrangements for carrying on the campaign. His trial lasted for one month as it was no easy task for the police to get documentary evidence against him and the police had to ask for fresh remands several times and the magistrate who happened to be a class-fellow of Rafi Ahmad and had become sick of the case asked him to accept or deny the charges. To this Rafi Ahmad replied that it was for the police to prove his guilt. The news of his arrest and conviction were widely displayed in the papers. Gandhiji's English weekly the *Young India* of 19 June 1930 also took notice of his conviction.

He had his first unpleasant experience in the Jail. He refused to do the work of preparing *moonj* ropes which he intensely disliked and on this account he had a clash with Walton—the British Commissioner of Lucknow Division who had paid a visit to Rae Bareilly Jail. He asked him why he did not do his work. Rafi Ahmad replied that he could not compel him to do it against his will. Hearing this, Walton raised his cane in rage to hit him. Rafi Ahmad caught hold of the cane and broke it. As a result he was put under solitary confinement and beaten up. One of his friends Abdul Mateen Chaudhri of Assam who had lived for about three years with Rafi Ahmad at Daryaganj, tabled a question in the Central Assembly about it resulting in his transfer to some other jail. In the jail, he kept himself well informed of the happenings outside. He had full information about the progress of the Civil Disobedience Movement in the various districts of U.P. through his contacts and made arrangements for the financial help of the indigent families of arrested Congress workers.

He was released towards the end of 1930 and rushed to the bedside of Motilal Nehru, his mentor and guide, and on his death he swore silently a life-long fealty and friendship to Jawaharlal Nehru, the son of the departed leader and remained faithful to this vow till the last days of his life. Motilal Nehru's death was a great shock to him and he was overwhelmed with grief. In him he had lost his guide, mentor, leader and an elderly affectionate friend.

He shared the views of Jawaharlal Nehru and other radical Congress leaders about Gandhi-Irwin Pact and it was during the period of truce, that is, between the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the commencement of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1932 that Jawaharlal Nehru, who was especially interested in working up the Peasant Movement in U.P. inducted Rafi Ahmad into the leadership of U.P. Congress as its General Secretary and the main organiser of the Kisan Movement because he felt convinced that Rafi Ahmad was the best person for this job. Rafi Ahmad was very much reluctant to get involved in U.P. Congress politics as he had deep reservations against some of U.P. Congress leaders who were communalists in their outlook. He feared that he would not be able to get on well with them and this would place him in an embarrassing position. But he had to accept the office which became all the more important and of great responsibility because of Jawaharlal's wishes. He became tremendously busy in the election of delegates to the Karachi Session of the Congress. He had then to face another calamity. A fierce communal riot broke out in Kanpur in which Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi—the President of U.P. Provincial Congress Committee was assassinated. Rafi Ahmad was deeply shocked and grieved over this irreparable loss as Vidyarthi was the dearest of his friends, brave and intrepid, honest, of amiable dis-

position, far-sighted and a staunch nationalist of liberal outlook who worked quietly, scorning publicity, office and lime light. His sacrifice made a deep impact on Rafi Ahmad and he got the Vidyarathi Memorial School established at Maharajganj in Gorakhpur district in his memory.

Before Gandhiji left for London to attend the second session of the Round Table Conference, the ground for the revival of the Civil Disobedience Movement was being prepared. A number of radical and militant Congressmen led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, strongly felt that too much had been given for the little by the Congress under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Official circles, on the other hand, were of the view that the Pact had gone too far and the Viceroy had been too conciliatory to Gandhiji and to the Congress. To many of them the very idea of the Viceroy concluding an agreement with the leader of an unlawful and rebel organisation was quite repugnant to the British prestige. Numerous complaints began to pour in the U.P. Congress office about the forcible collection of the arrears of land revenue, wholesale ejectments and attachments. Even Gandhiji's talks with Sir Malcolm Hailey, the Governor of U.P., about these matters proved to be fruitless. Rae Bareilly, the centre of the 'no-rent' campaign in 1930, was the worst affected. Peasants from the area flocked to Rafi Ahmad for help but he found himself quite helpless before the repression. Ejectments were decreed, attachment and auction of cattle and personal belongings of Kisans continued all over the Province. The U.P. Congress Committee of which Rafi Ahmad was the General Secretary pressed the Government to help peasants to get back their holdings. It appointed a committee to collect detailed agrarian data and submit its report on the prevailing situation. Rafi Ahmad was one of the most effective members of the committee and he

brought to bear on the deliberations of the committee an intimate knowledge of peasantry and its problems and also his recent experiences as the Chief organiser of the 'no-rent' campaign. Practically each sentence of the lengthy report of the committee bore the imprint of his personality. The report contained a masterly and in depth survey of the miserable plight of U.P. Kisans and an analysis of the havoc caused to them by the slump in the prices of agricultural products. The committee had come out with the suggestion that the rent should correspond with prices of agricultural commodities but the Government did not accept it. On the other hand it announced that if full rent was not paid by the Kisans within a month, the sanctioned remission would be withdrawn. The U.P. Congress, therefore, was left with no other alternative but to advise the Kisans not to pay rent till some settlement was arrived at.

Before Gandhiji returned from London, matters became worse. In Bengal, special ordinances were issued to deal with the terrorist activities and very many political activists were arrested. In N.W.F.P., severe restrictions were placed on the recruitment and training of *Khudai Khidmatgars*. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, his brother Dr. Khan Sahib, Jawaharlal Nehru and T.A.K. Sherwani were arrested. The Congress Working Committee had no other option but to launch Civil Disobedience Movement against the repressive policy of the Government in the first week of January 1932. The Government retaliated by banning the Congress and its allied organisations. A large number of Congressmen were rounded up under ordinances all over the country. A reign of terror and repression started. U.P. bore a large share of arrests and had to face in consequence great repression. After his arrest Jawaharlal Nehru sent a brief message to Rafi Ahmad through his wife

Kamala Nehru that he should not be in a hurry to go to prison as there was a lot to be done outside. Rafi Ahmad was appointed as the dictator of the 'no-rent' campaign in U.P. and he with his wonderful organising skill went ahead with his unrivalled courage and determination. He asked the District Congress Committee to call upon the Kisans to withhold payment of rents. Being an unphotographed little-noticed Congress leader, he escaped the first sweep of arrests and, therefore, it was possible for him to move throughout the province for several months to organise the movement. He appointed dictators for each district who were to be incharge of the 'no-rent' campaign and they were empowered to take decisions. Rafi Ahmad was confronted with the most important and difficult problem of collecting money to feed and sustain the indigent Congress workers and their families. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya proved to be of great help to him in this matter. In addition to Malaviyaji's help, he on his own managed to raise small amounts to run the movement. He kept no account but managed well with his fantastic memory for figures. He used the Khadi Bhandars which had not been outlawed by the Government as his banks. After he was arrested, Nehru was released who had the little chits of papers collected on which Rafi Ahmad had instructed the Khadi Bhandars to make payments and found that the receipts and disbursements were balanced very methodically. During this movement Rafi Ahmad used clandestine methods also. Letters to the Congress workers in different parts of the province were either carried by secret messengers or he addressed these letters to false pre-arranged addresses by post. These letters contained detailed instructions to the Congress workers about the movement and these proved to be of great help to them.

It was through these methods of Rafi Ahmad that the Congress in U.P. Province, despite the ruthless Government

repression, continued the Civil Disobedience Movement during those days for long. He also directed the district dictators to observe days with reference to special events or national leaders by holding meetings and taking out processions defying prohibitory orders. These were the methods to keep mass enthusiasm intact. Even whole weeks were devoted to this purpose. Under his able guidance several novel methods were adopted to deal with police raids. It was a really hard problem for the police to trace his whereabouts since he was the main brain of the Civil Disobedience Movement in U.P. and carried on incessantly the Congress Organisational work. The U.P. Congress was declared an unlawful organisation but his bulletins were published regularly and widely circulated and his instructions reached every district dictator. He was constantly on the move. He would leave his luggage in the railway station waiting room and go round the city in a tonga, meeting, helping, encouraging and guiding the hard pressed Congress workers in every possible way and in solving their difficulties, both financial and organisational. Jawaharlal Nehru paid glowing tributes to Rafi Ahmad as the chief organiser of the Civil Disobedience Movement in U.P. The U.P. Congress Office functioned regularly right through 1932 and the middle of 1933 when the Civil Disobedience Movement was first suspended by the acting Congress President on the advice of Gandhiji.

During this period frequent instructions were sent to districts, printed or cyclostyled, bulletins issued regularly, and district work inspected from time to time. Much of this operation was necessarily secret, but the secretary of the Provincial Committee incharge of the office always worked as such publicly till he was arrested and removed and another persons took his place. This narration of Jagan Prashad Rawat—a veteran U.P. Congress leader and one of the lieutenants of

Rafi Ahmàd gives some idea of the novel methods which Rafi Ahmad used in conducting the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1932. According to him during these days once Rafi Ahmad summoned him to Allahabad and handed over to him a sum of Rs. 1,000 and a number of pamphlets for conducting the Civil Disobedience Movement. Before his departure, he asked him to take with him eight big baskets of guavas and to his utter surprise, he found that under one or two layers of guavas pamphlets had been kept. Rafi Ahmad advised him to keep away from baskets during his journey to avoid arrest. On another occasion he asked him to hold a meeting of the outlawed U.P. Provincial Congress Committee Executive at Agra. On the scheduled day the meeting took place and pamphlets were distributed in one of the main markets. The members of the committee were arrested and Rafi Ahmad, being disguised, avoided detection and he went away to Lucknow. He was responsible for sending the largest number of delegates, over 900, to the outlawed session of the Congress, held at Calcutta in 1932. This was one of his great achievements. U.P. remained in the fore-front of the Civil Disobedience Movement right through 1932 and 1933 due to Rafi Ahmad's strategy and kept up the fight while in the rest of India the Congress was disintegrated and the Civil Disobedience Movement practically collapsed.

While in Jail he remained in close touch with the outside world and made arrangements for the financial assistance of the families of the Congress workers. He even sent money for the ceremonial gifts on the occasion of the marriage of the daughter of a Congress co-prisoner and for the treatment of his family members.

Despite the fact that the Civil Disobedience Movement had been suppressed by the government, Rafi Ahmad was

deadly opposed to surrender. He severely condemned those Congress leaders who talked of withdrawing the Civil Disobedience Movement and advocated council entry and of participating in forthcoming elections of the Central Legislative Assembly or the resumption of parliamentary programme by the Congress. In 1933 at a conference called by Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mr. M.S. Aney—the then acting President of the Congress he said that the Civil Disobedience Movement had not failed but the Congress leadership had failed. To him it was all due to the defeatist approach of the leadership. He lamented that the Congress leaders no longer talked of the goal of complete independence but only of the parliamentary programme which was nothing but a clear betrayal.

Later in 1933 when Gandhiji followed up his fasts against untouchability with a country-wide campaign for Harijan uplift and a large number of Congress workers joined this campaign, Rafi Ahmad did not like the idea that Congressmen should devote themselves exclusively to the Harijan uplift campaign and give up altogether political activities and Jawaharlal Nehru also agreed with him.

Jawaharlal Nehru, Rafi Ahmad and a number of other U.P. Congress leaders had read Marx and Socialist literature in Jail. So on their release they organised a series of lectures on socialism at Anand Bhawan, Allahabad. A number of Congress leaders like Narendra Dev, Sri Prakash and Sampurnanand attended these lectures, spoke there and agreed on the goal and concept of socialism. Thus the move started for organising the socialist movement in U.P. But before any attempt could be made both Nehru and Rafi Ahmad were arrested. It was before their release that a Congress Socialist Party under the Congress was formed with Narendra Dev, Sri Prakash and Sampurnanand joining it.

This goes to Rafi Ahmad's credit that on account of his tireless efforts and wonderful organising skill U.P. remained in the forefront of the two Civil Disobedience Movements and twice the mass agrarian movements were successfully organised and the repressive policy of the Government failed to crush them.

VIII

As Chief Organiser of 1937 Elections

WHILE NEHRU AND Rafi Ahmad were in Jail, the group of Congressmen advocating the resumption of parliamentary programme by the Congress led by Dr. Ansari, Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Bhula Bhai Desai, Dr. B.C. Roy and Satya Murthi secured Gandhiji's blessings for the return of the Congress to the legislatures and a decision was taken by this group at Ranchi to revive the Swaraj Party and enter legislatures. This decision was regarded by radical and militant Congressmen of U.P. as a retreat. Finally at the Patna session of the All-India Congress Committee, it was decided that the Congress should resume parliamentary activities and fight elections directly under the name of the Congress and not under the Swaraj Party.

Rafi Ahmad was released in August 1934 and in an article to the *Pioneer* of Lucknow he bitterly attacked the Congress leadership for letting down the national movement and indicted several advocates of the parliamentary programme for not participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement. He denounced the newly appointed Congress Parliamentary Board as undemocratic as its members had been nominated by

Dr. Ansari and Pt. Malaviya and demanded that it should be an elected one. The main reason for his opposition to the Congress Parliamentary Board was ideological as it had enunciated such a programme in its election manifesto which suited only moderates, constitutionalists or reformers like Chintamani and Hirday Nath Kunzru who were opposed to the Congress stand of complete independence. Moreover, the Board had some such members who had not only not participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement but were bitterly opposed to it and even to the Lahore Resolution of the Congress. He threatened that he would make the U.P. Congress boycott the coming election of the Central Assembly if the Congress demand of complete independence was not reiterated and the Parliamentary Board was not made elective by the A.I.C.C. Instead of going home to see his parents and wife, he went on a tour of the province to enlist support for his stand and received wide support from the U.P. Congressmen. Jawaharlal Nehru in his letter to Gandhiji in which he had told Gandhiji of his intense anguish at the incident of the flag of freedom being hauled down at Ranchi and Patna and also of his anger at the threats of disciplinary action against Congress militants who dared to oppose the sell out and also of his own mental state, in which his own bonds with Gandhiji were being strained to the breaking point, saved Rafi Ahmad against whom there was a move to expel him from the Congress for his public statements, denouncing the Central Congress Parliamentary Board and most of the Congress leaders. But the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee fully supported him in this fight and Rafi Ahmad was called to Wardha where a meeting of the Congress Working Committee was held. He had talks with Gandhiji and ultimately he won both his points. The Congress Working Committee reiterated the Congress goal of complete independence. And it further decided to have a new Congress Parlia-

mentary Board after the Central Assembly elections. This victory of Rafi Ahmad pleased militant Congressmen all over the country.

He was bitterly opposed to the proposed changes in the Congress Constitution at the Bombay Session of the party held in 1934 as these would have radically altered the complexion of the Congress organisation and would have converted it into an all-India spinners association type of organisation for the changes envisaged selective membership for which the qualifications were hand spinning and some other forms of social uplift work in villages. Rafi Ahmad alongwith other Congress militants felt that the four anna membership of the Congress, that is, the primary membership of the organisation, was a guarantee for Congress militancy as it made the influx of Kisans and workers in the Congress easy and made it a democratic organisation. He feared that the proposed amendments would cut the roots of radical elements in the Congress. He mustered all radical forces including the Congress socialists and succeeded in bringing about substantial changes in the proposed amendments.

He campaigned for the Congress candidates in the Central Assembly election and the Congress swept the polls in U.P. by capturing all the general seats i.e. Non-Muslim seats and in Muslim constituencies its ally, the Muslim Unity Board comprising the Congress Muslims, Jamait-ul-Ulema and former Khilafatist had splendid success by winning five out of six Muslim seats in U.P.

Elections under the Act of 1935 were to take place in February 1937 and his dominating passion was to wreck the Government of India Act of 1935 which denied real power to the legislature. But he did not rule out the other possibility of

the Congress deciding to accept offices. He, therefore, thought of finding a suitable person who could be the Premier or Chief Minister of U.P. which was a composite Hindu-Muslim province and also of controlling the U.P. Congress so that right type of Congressmen could be returned to U.P. legislature.

The U.P. Provincial Congress Committee at that time was in the hands of Congress socialists who had strong ties with P.D. Tandon and the anti-Socialist Acharya Kripalani. C.B. Gupta was not only deeply associated with them but was also virtually their boss. Therefore despite his strong belief in socialism, Rafi Ahmad could not support the Congress socialist group as he found that many of them were no socialists at all as they were very close to communalists. He was firmly of the view that in a composite province like U.P., which happened to be the home of the national composite culture, the choice of the Premier should be a man of liberal outlook and his choice fell on Pt. G.B. Pant who had the additional advantage of having rich parliamentary experience as he had been the leader of the opposition in U.P. Council from 1923 to 1929. He felt the need and necessity of controlling the U.P. Congress by sending the right type of Congressmen to the legislature. He had been in nearly full control of the Congress machinery during the years of two Civil Disobedience Movements when he had conducted these two movements and he knew practically every Congressman of U.P. and many of whom felt indebted to him for the great care which he had taken of their families by giving them financial assistance when they were behind the bars. After his release, he was again elected as one of the secretaries of U.P. Congress at the Etawah Conference of U.P. Congress but he did not take up the secretaryship. On the other hand he issued a circular to U.P. Congressmen that he would take up this job only when he had the full assurance that he would

have complete support from the U.P. Congress in his fight for the adoption of radical policies and militant programmes by the Congress. He received a large number of letters from U.P. Congress workers congratulating him on this stand and pledging full support to him. The significance of his circular lay in its character of a personal manifesto that he was not less radical or militant than the Congress socialists who controlled the U.P. Congress with whom he could not pull on.

There was a bitter factional in-fighting over the office bearers of the Reception Committee of the Lucknow Session of the Congress of 1936 for the faction which controlled the Reception Committee would have controlled the left-over funds which were considerable and would also have controlled the U.P. Congress organisation and, therefore, it assumed great importance for the warring factions. Rafi Ahmad had his eyes on the forthcoming U.P. Assembly elections which were to be held in 1937 and the U.P. Congress had to choose its leader to work or wreck the Act of 1935 and his choice had already fallen on Pt. G.B. Pant who had rich parliamentary experience and was a leader of liberal outlook.

In July 1935, the U.P. Congress Executive proposed a panel of names consisting of Rafi Ahmad, Sampurnanand and Mohan Lal Saxena for the next presidentship of U.P. Congress for election by the District Congress Committees. This office was Rafi Ahmad's due after having functioned as the Secretary of U.P. Congress Committee for about a decade and as the Chief Organiser of the two Civil Disobedience Movements in U.P.. Mohan Lal Saxena withdrew in favour of Rafi Ahmad and there was a contest between Rafi Ahmad and Sampurnanand. Rafi Ahmad was so sure of his hold over the rank and file of the U.P. Congress that he did not go anywhere to seek votes

for himself and the overwhelming majority of District Committees voted for him. Unfortunately, some of his political opponents tried to give a communal colour to this election but they miserably failed in their attempt. Thus Rafi Ahmad became the U.P. Congress Chief at the time of 1937 elections.

Rafi Ahmad was strongly opposed to office acceptance by the Congress as at both the Bombay and Lucknow sessions, the Congress had decided to challenge the Government of India Act of 1935 as it was totally unacceptable. He, therefore, launched a campaign for non-acceptance of office by the Congress in August 1935 and succeeded in getting the support of a number of Congressmen, headed by Sarat Bose, Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Narendra Dev and other socialists and Congress militants. He felt that the Congress could not both work for and wreck the Act and that the fight for independence would have to be abandoned if the Congress entered into ministries and this would be a great betrayal of the Indian people. Through his efforts an all-India 'anti office acceptance' conference, attended by hundreds of Congressmen from all over the country was held in Lucknow along with the Congress session under the presidentship of Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar—a member of the Congress Working Committee where a resolution was passed against 'office acceptance' by the Congress. Rafi Ahmad was the moving spirit behind the conference. He moved the main resolution opposing the acceptance of office by the Congress. After the Lucknow session of the Congress, held in April 1936, he presided over the U.P. Political Conference, held at Unnao in June 1936 and strongly pleaded for socialism. He strongly opposed the office acceptance by the Congress on the ground that Congressmen were pledged not to accept any constitution which did not give complete independence and which placed them as subordinates

to the British and that the fight for complete independence could only be carried on while the Congress was in opposition. Once the Congress accepted office, it would cease to be effective in its struggle. It was sure to lose its revolutionary fervour and militancy. He strongly condemned the activities of the anti-socialist Congressmen who had been seeking allies in moderates and industrialists in fighting socialists.

Being the President of the U.P. Congress, he was also the President of U.P. Congress Parliamentary Board and the whole burden of organising the election campaign and setting up of the election machinery fell on him. He proved more than a match for this arduous task. He had detailed information about the position and prospect of practically each and every Congress candidate because of his intimate knowledge of pre-poll scene all over the province. He even had on his finger tips the number of actual voters in each constituency and the number expected to vote for the Congress candidates. He even remembered how many workers had been allotted to each constituency. The Congress message was carried practically to every village of U P. and Rafi Ahmad made an extensive tour of the Province. Kisans and workers were made to feel that the election heralded for them the coming of a new era. The devotion and zeal with which the Kisans and mill-workers flocked to polling stations covering many miles on foot to vote for the Congress was the proof of the success of the methods which Rafi Ahmad had adopted to propagate the Congress message. All sorts of threats had been given to Kisans by landlords and Zamindars but these had no effect on them and they voted enbloc openly for the Congress.

As the Congress had lost nearly all its landlord sympathisers because of the 'no-rent' campaign organised in the

two Civil Disobedience Movements and also because from the central campaign fund of the Congress, the U.P. Congress had received meagre amount, Rafi Ahmad had to raise money through various, even some unorthodox means. For instance, he got money from leading Zamindar members of the National Agriculturists Party—(A party of Zamindars formed to contest election and fight the Congress) who were anxious to see their landlord rivals defeated. He also got round some bank managers and raised money as overdraft on personal pronotes. He even got one of his friends in Government service to loan him money from his provident fund. He managed, as if by some magic trick, hundreds of cars and thousands of cycles for the Congress candidates. The Congress candidates marvelled at his seemingly magical powers of producing money from somewhere and felt very much indebted to him for he proved to be the inexhaustible supplier of funds to them. He proved to be a very tactful and capable party leader and one of the most successful managers of election machinery. During these months of acute anxiety, tension and great strain he had several heart attacks but with his great will power he continued to direct the whole Congress election campaign while lying in bed with telephone in his hand.

Before election, Rafi Ahmad entered into a pact with Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya and his candidates or the Congress nationalists as they were known, to have freedom of vote according to their conscience on the Communal Award which the Congress had neither accepted nor rejected. Rafi Ahmad came out with this formula as no question concerning the award was likely to come in U.P. Assembly. One great advantage of this pact was that Pt. Malaviya could provide money to the Congress because many of the Indian capitalists happened to be his admirers. In fact, it was a unilateral pact for which

Rafi Ahmad had no mandate from the Executive of U.P. Congress. He was criticized for it by the Congress socialists but because of Nehru's intervention the pact was not repudiated.

Rafi Ahmad contested from Gonda District but as he was too busy in organising the Congress election campaign he did not even once visit his constituency and neglected it both in respect of men and money. Unfortunately, the Congress in those days had little contact with Muslim electorate and it was because of these reasons that he lost the election. This shows that he was least interested in his own political future.

Nehru's whirlwind tour of U.P. alongwith Rafi Ahmad's remarkable organisational ability was responsible for the glorious victory of the Congress in U.P.. It secured as many as 134 out of 228 seats and the National Agriculturists Party was completely routed in general or non-Muslim Constituencies. This most spectacular victory of the Congress in U.P. was the wonderful and splendid achievement of Rafi Ahmad. This victory was celebrated at a mammoth public meeting at Lucknow in which Nehru paid glowing tributes to Rafi Ahmad for his masterly feat of organising the U.P. Congress election machinery. This splendid achievement enhanced his position in the Congress organisation and popularity as the most successful election manager.

Role as Minister

THE NEWLY ELECTED Congress legislators of U.P. were to elect their leader. Rafi Ahmad's choice had already fallen on Govind Ballabh Pant who was noted for his liberal outlook and, therefore, according to him, he deserved to be the Premier of U.P. — a composite Hindu-Muslim Province. He had the additional advantage of having rich parliamentary experience by having been the leader of Opposition in U.P. Council from 1923 to 1929. The Congress Legislature Party had the majority of Rafi Ahmad's followers. In the choice of Pant he got the support of Narendra Dev, the Congress socialist leader, and both of them had no difficulty in getting the blessings of Nehru to his election.

Rafi Ahmad was strongly opposed to office acceptance by the Congress and he had reiterated this stand publicly. Nehru also held the same views. But some Congressmen were suspicious of Rafi Ahmad's bonafides as a professed wrecker of the constitution. They asked how could a person who would be an inevitable choice for ministership if the Congress formed the ministry and who was so close to Pantji and to those in U.P. who were for working the constitution could be sincere about non-acceptance of office. To these critics he replied that he was not fighting for himself to be a minister or not to be a minister;

what was important was that the Congress should refuse to form ministries under the constitution of 1935. If, however, the Congress formed ministries, his acceptance of ministership would be no breach of its principles as he was bound by the discipline of the Party.

Soon after this election, leaders of Congress Legislature parties in Congress-majority provinces were invited by Governors to form ministries but in pursuance of a resolution of the Congress Working Committee, they demanded an assurance from them that they would not interfere in the day-to-day working. On not getting this assurance they declined to form ministries.

Ultimately, in July 1937, the deadlock between the Congress and the Government was resolved by statements of the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy, which gave a satisfactory assurance of non-interference in the day-to-day work of Congress ministries by the governors. So Congress ministries were formed in the Congress-majority provinces.

Rafi Ahmad, who had been returned unopposed to U.P. Assembly in a bye election earlier, was given the portfolio of Revenue and Jails—the two departments which needed reforms most.

The task before the Congress ministries was a stupendous one. Until now the Government had been carried on in the old way—on the lines of a police state, hence the provinces had completely bureaucratic administration. Now for the first time, a popular ministry was at the helm of affairs and there were great expectations. People wanted immediate redress of their grievances. Congress ministries were to work out Congress policies and programmes within the framework of

the Government of India Act of 1935 through the agency of the uncompromising civil servants whose outlook towards life and public affairs and whose ways and methods of Government and ideas were diametrically opposed to their ministers. This made the task of ministers more difficult. Moreover, under the Act of 1935, ministers could not take any drastic action against civil servants as they enjoyed the protection of the Governors. The most difficult problem which the U.P. Congress ministry had to face was the Zamindar-Tenant problem. It fell on Rafi Ahmad to solve it. He fully understood the importance as well as the intricacies of the problem as he himself belonged to a Zamindar family and as a member of the Congress Agrarian Enquiry Committee had made a thorough survey of the whole problem and by leading the two 'no-rent' campaigns in the province. He was well aware of the miserable plight of Kisans and also the ways of landlords. This problem covered practically all the functional aspects of the ministry and so from this the magnitude of the problem can well be judged. All the efforts of the Congress ministry, therefore, aimed at ameliorating the condition of tenants. U.P. was the first province to remove some of the greatest evils and defects of the Zamindari System. There were three different tenancy laws in U.P.—one for the Agra Province, the other for Oudh and the third for hill areas; and now there was to be one law—the U.P. tenancy Law for the plains. Rafi Ahmad piloted this bill—that is the U.P. Tenancy Law, which conferred hereditary rights on tenants and all types of Customary *Nazranas* and unauthorised cesses were abolished and, over and above all, the inhuman practice of *Begar* was totally abolished. The issue of receipt for rents was made compulsory. The main object of the bill was to save the tenant from age-long oppression of ejectment. It created conditions for the abolition of Zamindari System. It protected the Kisans against

arbitrary rent increases. The concept of feudal tenure was replaced by a contractual relationship between the landlord and the tenants as equals. These changes were pioneering and were hailed as the *Magna Carta* of the peasantry. All sorts of obstructions were put to the passage of the bill by both the National Agriculturists Party and the landlords-dominated Muslim League by numerous amendments and by long and irrelevant speeches with the result that the debate on the bill lingered on for about two years. Rafi Ahmad proved more than a match for his opponents in the long discussions during the heated debates. This bill was the greatest achievement of Rafi Ahmad and brought a great relief to the tenants of U.P. as they got rid of many repressions. Now they could not be ejected from their lands by the mere sweet will of Zamindars. Among the complementary bills which also brought relief to U.P. tenants were the Agriculturist and Workmen Redemption Bill which was included to make better provision for the regulation and conduct of the business of money-lending. It also provided for cancellation of the licence for any money-lending person or agency which indulged in tricks or frauds and recovery of loans was only left for the licenced money-lenders. Another important legislation was to provide for the consolidation of scattered holdings which also went to improve the conditions of peasants. Under his stewardship, U.P. was the first province to do away with some of the grave defects of the centuries-old Zamindari system despite limitations due to the Act of 1935. This was a marvellous achievement of Rafi Ahmad.

The question of the release of political prisoners which formed an important part of the Congress election manifesto, led to a ministerial crisis. In U.P. there were a large number of political prisoners. On the assumption of office, therefore,

Rafi Ahmad at once took up the question of their release. These were various categories of the prisoners. The first category consisted of those who had not been charged with acts of violence. The Governor was not willing to release even these prisoners. Through persuasion, reasoning and tact, Rafi Ahmad got the order of their release issued. Then came other prisoners including those of famous Kakori Conspiracy Case. The Governor refused to order their release while Rafi Ahmad was adamant that the Congress mandate must be carried through. This led to the resignation of Congress ministry in February 1938. Finally, the Governor had to yield on the intervention of the Viceroy and the ministry withdrew its resignation and these prisoners were released after their cases had been individually examined. This was Rafi Ahmad's great triumph over the Governor and the bureaucracy and for the first time in the history of India, a British Governor had to bow before the public opinion.

Having spent several years in different jails of U P., Rafi Ahmad was fully aware of all the shortcomings of jail administration and the miserable condition of prisoners. So he carried on far-reaching reforms in jails with the result that the whole system was overhauled and brought in line with the system prevailing in progressive countries of the world. It was far more advanced in comparison to other Indian provinces. His initial legislation, in this regard was the first Offenders Probation Act. Under this the delinquent were placed under the supervision of probationary officers who found home and employment for them and thus saved them from shame and ignominy. Among other important reforms were the opening of a Borstal institution, of a special jail for mentally deficient, a new scientific system of classification of prisoners, replacement of hard labour by easy work for prisoners, standardizing

ROLE AS MINISTER

of labour and establishment of a training school for the jail staff. A director of industries was appointed for the regulation of jail industries and a jail depot was also started. A scheme for the payment of wages to prisoners was also introduced. Thus for the treatment of anti-social elements, U.P. jails were converted into moral hospitals. He also made suitable provisions for the care of prisoners after their release and a discharged prisoners' society was formed in every district.

He continued to take an active part in the Congress politics and was the most powerful U.P. Congress leader. He openly canvassed support for Subhas Chandra Bose for Congress Presidentship with whose views and programme he fully agreed. Bose secured a majority of votes from U.P. largely on account of Rafi Ahmad's support.

He was the most powerful and yet the most accessible minister. A large number of visitors belonging to different sections and communities used to bring their problems and he generously helped them and resolved their difficulties. He was considered as the greatest friend of the poor and the needy and a number of young men got employment through him and many students could complete their studies only because of his generous help.

He took to task those civilians or bureaucrats who either showed disrespect to him or defied his orders. Once he went on tour to Gorakhpur. The local English District Magistrate did not come to the railway station to receive him, out of arrogance, flouting the protocol. Considering it below his dignity to receive the former arch rebel, he sent the Joint Magistrate in his place. He thus tried to humiliate Rafi Ahmad who on his return to Lucknow taught a lesson to him by

getting him transferred to the Secretariat in his own department. That was the only punishment a minister could give to the I.C.S. Officers under the Act of 1935.

The dispute over the public recitation of *Madah-e-Sahaba* or the praise of the companions of the Prophet in public processions between the Shias and Sunnis of Lucknow took a serious turn in March 1939 when the Sunnis launched a mass Civil Disobedience Movement in support of their demand. The Congress ministry, thereupon, allowed the Sunnis to take out a *Madah-e-Sahaba* procession on the birthday of the Prophet, to the great chagrin and annoyance of the Shias who retaliated by starting a counter movement of openly reciting *Tabarra* or curses on the first three *Khalifas* of Islam and courting imprisonment in defiance of law. This led to an outbreak of Shia-Sunni riot and for several months the old city remained under curfew. Allama Mashriqi, the chief of Khaksar movement or the paramilitary anti-Congress movement, came to Lucknow in August 1939 and announced that he would compel Shias and Sunnis of Lucknow to accept his solution. A large number of Khaksar volunteers armed with 'Belchas' reached Lucknow and they clashed with the pro-Congress Majlis-e-Ahrar volunteers which led to a grave breach of peace in the city. Apprehending more serious trouble from the side of the Khaksars, Rafi Ahmad who in those days was the acting Premier on account of the illness of Pandit Pant, decided to take firm action against the Khaksars. He summoned topmost officials who were somewhat reluctant in taking drastic action against the Khaksars as they were afraid of them and feared that the Khaksars would offer armed resistance. But Rafi Ahmad overruled them and decided to take firm action. It was solely on his initiative that at about 2 a.m. Allama Mashriqi—the Khaksar Chief was arrested from Amethi House, adjacent to Aminabad post office where he was

staying. The Khaksar volunteers camping at the nearby Gunge Nawab Ka Park were also rounded up. Contrary to the expectations of Police officials, the Khaksars did not offer any resistance. The Allama was released after tendering an unconditional apology. Rafi Ahmad's assessment that the Khaksars would pose no serious problem proved to be correct and the agitation which was launched by the Khaksars after the Allama's arrest and release soon fizzled out. This established Rafi Ahmad's position as a very strong administrator, uncowed by any threat.

The Second World War broke out in September 1939 and the Viceroy declared India at war with Germany and her allies without consulting either the Central Assembly or the popular provincial ministries. The Congress Working Committee called upon the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms their aims of waging the war. It also demanded that India must be declared an independent nation and immediate recognition must be given to this status to the largest possible extent. To this, the Viceroy replied that the entire constitutional scheme could be re-examined only after the war and he also referred to unbridgeable Hindu-Muslim differences over constitutional problems.

The Congress Working Committee declared the Viceroy's statement as most unsatisfactory and decided not to give any support to the British Government in the war efforts as it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress had always sought to oppose. It called upon all Congress ministries to resign and, accordingly, the U.P. Ministry like our Congress ministries resigned in the last week of October 1939. Thus the brief spell of the Congress rule in U.P. in which Rafi Ahmad had splendid achievements to his credit, came to an end.

Rafi Ahmad and 'Quit India' Movement

UNDER GANDHIJI'S SUPREME leadership the individual 'anti-war' Satyagraha was started in October 1940 and it lasted for about one year. Rafi Ahmad was incharge of this movement in U.P. and all ministers and members of the Central Assembly and U.P. legislature, members of All-India Provincial Congress Committees and office bearers of District and City Congress Committees courted arrest for raising anti-war slogans. Rafi Ahmad was also arrested in December 1940 but before his arrest he had organised this movement so excellently that it continued unabated and the members of the families of the arrested Congressmen who needed financial assistance received it regularly.

After his release in November 1941, he undertook an extensive tour of the province for preparing people for the coming struggle which he had anticipated. As early as in November 1940 he directed Mr. Jagan Prasad Rawat—one of his trusted lieutenants and a veteran U.P. Congress leader to proceed to Bombay and send some material given to him by a person there to Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri through railway parcel at Allahabad. He also gave a letter for a radio dealer of

Bombay. On reaching Bombay, Mr. Rawat contacted that radio dealer and he handed over to him a transmitter and some other material and Mr. Rawat sent its parcel to Shastriji as per Rafi Ahmad's instructions through train. This transmitter and other material was used in the underground activities of 'Quit India' Movement. While presiding over the Maharaj Ganj Tehsil (of Gorakhpur) political conference in April 1942 he observed that the war was soon to bring misery to the people and they had to guard themselves against disorder and lawlessness in the event of the war being carried to India's soil. He was confident that Indians could defend their country and no country could enslave them if they had the spirit of freedom. He asked them to emulate China which could not be conquered inspite of over five years' Japanese invasion. He further warned them not to be happy over Japanese victory as Japan was a fascist power and could not be of any help to India. He expressed his abhorrence towards fascism and his determined opposition to it and exhorted the people to prepare themselves fully for the coming struggle, which would be grim. Same was the theme of his speeches at other places. Everywhere he met a large number of Congress workers and apprised them of the political situation in the country as well as of the international and war situation. He had always been deeply concerned with the release of political prisoners. The meeting of AICC held at Allahabad in the last week of April and first week of May 1942 provided him an opportunity to move in the situation. He organised a meeting over which he presided and which was attended by a large number of AICC members and other Congressmen. In the meeting a number of resolutions were passed strongly protesting against the continued detention of a large number of patriots all over the country and against the inhuman treatment meted out to them and against the deprivation of their individual liberty against the rules of all civilised norms.

protesting against discrimination in the treatment of detenus and against the absence of adequate basic amenities and facilities for them and against meagre family allowance and demanding the release of all detenus.

The pamphlets about the policy of the Congress Party on war and other issues were to be published in English, Urdu and Hindi languages in several lakhs but no printing press was prepared to undertake this job on account of the fear of the strong Government action. In order to solve this difficulty, Rafi Ahmad purchased English, Urdu and Hindi printing presses, got these pamphlets published and, immediately after, sold these presses at some profit. The Congress thus had not to spend a single penny. His getting of the five lakh copies of pamphlets published in the three languages within two days was another proof of his amazing skill of planning. The U.P. Government considered Rafi Ahmad as the most dangerous political leader and his activities were considered as the most dangerous and seditious, highly prejudicial to war efforts and a very grave menace to the peace and administration of the province. Therefore, he was arrested in May 1942 under the Defence of India Rules. In all probability, he was the first Congress leader to be arrested before the commencement of the 'Quit India' Movement. His arrest led to the country-wide protests and a number of protest meetings were held congratulating him on his arrest and condemning the Government. His extensive tours of the farthest corners of the province had already prepared the people and Congress workers for the bitter struggle. So when the 'Quit India' Movement started, his province was in the forefront of the battle despite the highly repressive measures of the Government. Over 16,000 persons were arrested and the collective fines realized through very harsh and ruthless measures amounted to over Rs. 28 lakhs. Railway stations

numbering 104 were attacked and severely damaged and about 100 incidents of sabotage were reported while over 125 cases of sabotage to telephones and telegraph lines were recorded and 119 post offices were destroyed.

Arrests of Congress leaders at Bombay were followed by usual repressive measures throughout U.P. by the Government. The Congress organisation was declared unlawful and all the offices of Congress committees including that of U.P. Provincial Congress Committee were sealed and its papers and records removed. There were mass raids at the houses of Congressmen. Mass demonstrations which continued for several weeks were followed by clashes between the police and the people. There were brutal lathi-charges to disperse the demonstrators, resulting in injuries to thousands of people. At a number of places there were firings in which a number of people lost their lives. At Ballia and several other places, where for sometime the entire administration was paralysed, the army was called to put down disorder and it succeeded after committing horrible atrocities on the people. Very rigid press censorship was imposed. A number of papers, including the *National Herald*, had to cease their publication.

While remaining in jail for over three years, except a brief period of parole on account of the serious illness of his father, Rafi Ahmad continued to receive full and detailed information about the happenings in the outside world during those stormy days of 'Quit India' Movement and after, through a net work of devoted reporters. According to Jagan Prasad Rawat, he had sent the information to him on 5 August 1942, when he was in Gorakhpur jail to inform the U.P. Congress leaders who had gone to Bombay to attend the AICC meeting that warrants for their arrest had been issued.

and that they should return to their districts immediately avoiding arrest. Mr. Rawat had succeeded in sending this message to all U.P. Congress leaders in Bombay. During his release on parole, the author alongwith some other workers of Lucknow Students Federation met Rafi Ahmad and we were all surprised that he was not only fully informed of political happenings about our, that is, students' activities and the Muslim League politics but also about the University affairs and he was deeply concerned about the terrible Bengal famine. During those days the author had formed the Lucknow Culture Society in Lucknow University to popularise the Lucknow culture which was an embodiment of national composite culture, news about which had been published in the news papers. Rafi Ahmad made enquiries even about the progress of this society. To get authentic news in the jail which could not be found in the pro-Government news papers supplied in the jail to him and other political prisoners, he got a common pool created out of the savings from the daily allowances of political prisoners and through this money copies of a nationalist daily were obtained through a member of the jail staff. The news of atrocities and excesses committed by the police and the military in the eastern districts of U.P., especially Ballia, deeply shocked him. From jail he made elaborate arrangements for the financial help of the families and dependents of Congress workers who were in jail and this was both most creditable and astonishing. According to Uma Shankar Dikshit—the former Union Home Ministers who had also been close to him, Rafi Ahmad managed to secure finance from various sources and send money, the acutely needed assistance, to political prisoners inside jail and their families outside, who were experiencing considerable hardships. He was so much well informed that when a batch of prisoners including Uma Shankar Dikshit was being transferred from Agra to Lucknow jail, he sent an

emissary who met them at the railway station and offered such help as the prisoners needed. He had full information about the families of political prisoners and sent money on the occasion of marriage or for medical treatment from jail.

He was released on 15 July 1945, after more than three years with a completely shattered health. With his arrival, the Councillors' Residence in Lucknow where he lived during those days, throbbed with life and political workers from all parts of the province flocked to it in large numbers. Their number exceeded hundreds and a number of them stayed with him as his guests.

He started full preparation for elections to the Central Assembly and U.P. Assembly for giving a tough fight to the Muslim League which had taken full advantage of the absence of the Congress from the scene for three years and which enjoyed the full patronage of the Government. Soon after his release, the Muslim League workers began to spread this canard that Rafi Ahmad was about to leave the Congress alongwith a number of Muslim Congressmen. He came out forcefully with a strong contradiction. He undertook a whirlwind tour of the province and did a lot to set up the Congress Organisation machinery in many districts which had been paralysed during the 'Quit India' Movement. Office buildings of the Congress Committee had been taken over by the Government. Even the U.P. provincial Congress could not get possession of its office building. Rafi Ahmad succeeded in getting the office building at Pan Dariba in the house of Sardar Sant Singh and also arranged money for running the office.

He had no doubt about the Congress sweeping the polls in general, that is, in Non-Muslim constitutencies. But he had

grave apprehension about the Muslim seats because of the open Government support of the Muslim League and because of the intense League propanganda backed by the official machinery, which had done havoc during the absence of the Congress Leaders. The Congress and nationalist Muslims found themselves greatly handicapped. It was very difficult for them to rehabilitate themselves among the Muslim masses who had been led astray by the malicious and false propanganda of the Muslim League and by its appeal to communal passions. Rafi Ahmad vigorously campaigned for the removal of several obstacles like the restriction on the Press, continued detention of a number of Congress workers and the vacation of Congress office buildings. It was he who through his press statements forced the U.P. Government to order for the revision of electoral list. The revised list now included voters belonging to artisan groups, workers and peasants who were committed to vote for the Congress. As the convener of the U.P. Congress Parliamentary Board, the heavy task of organising the election campaign was borne by him and he had to do it under very heavy odds. The first immediate problem was to raise funds for the Congress candidates and arrange for vehicles. Numerous telephone calls came to him from different parts of the province requesting him to arrange for money, send workers, speakers and vehicles and Rafi Ahmad complied with all these requests. He received numerous complaints from Congress and nationalist Muslim workers about the charges of open interference of Government officials in favour of Muslim League. For instance, in the Central Assembly elections in Lucknow at some polling stations, the Muslim League workers had not allowed the Congress workers and nationalist Muslims to have their camps and had forced voters to vote for League candidates and the officials had taken no notice of these malpractices adopted by the League. These had been done at other

places as well. Rafi Ahmad brought all these complaints to the notice of the Government through press statements. To intensify the Congress propaganda among Muslim masses, he started a high class Urdu daily *Qaumi Awaz* from Lucknow which soon became the leading Urdu daily of northern India and did a lot in educating Muslims and popularising the Congress policies among them. He worked hard for mobilising Muslim support in fighting the Muslim League. Details of all this have been given in the next chapter. His untiring efforts and marvellous organising skill were responsible for the land-slide victory of the Congress both in the Central as well as U.P. Assembly election and for the considerable success of Congress and nationalist Muslim candidates in U.P.

As many as 12 Muslim seats of U.P. Assembly were captured by the Congress and nationalist Muslim candidates and 35 percent of votes were polled by them and this went to falsify the tall claim of the Muslim League that the Congress and nationalist Muslim candidates would forfeit their security and that the League represented cent per cent Muslims. Unfortunately, Rafi Ahmad lost his election from three Muslim constituencies.

Sir Maurice Hallet—the die-hard imperialist Governor of U.P. who was responsible for the atrocities committed on the people and for following a highly repressive policy during 1942 was to retire by the end of 1945. Bureaucrats and industrialists were planning to raise a memorial in his honour and a committee was also set up for the purpose. Rafi Ahmad was the first person to oppose this move and he started an agitation which gained momentum. Ultimately, the project of a memorial hospital to honour the retiring Governor had to be abandoned.

While directing the Congress election campaign he was not unmindful of those revolutionaries or political prisoners who were still in jails. They were treated like criminals and all their efforts to get redress of their grievances had failed. As a protest against the indifferent and callous attitude of the Government, Jogesh Chatterji—the noted revolutionary resorted to hunger strike unto death—until the demands of political prisoners were accepted. By 27 January 1946 many other prisoners in other jails also joined this strike. Rafi Ahmad not only fully supported this but also strongly protested to the Government against the harsh and inhuman treatment meted out to political prisoners and pleaded for the acceptance of their demands which were most reasonable. He carried on a vigorous campaign to this effect and succeeded in compelling the Government to accept a number of their demands and grant some facilities to them.

There were large scale ejectments in Oudh by *Taluqadars* who were determined to get back privileges which they had lost during the Congress rule of 1937-39. All the tenants who had not complied with their illegal demands had been ejected and their land forcefully siezed. The district authorities did not do anything to stop them from these illegalities. Rafi Ahmad strongly protested against these cruel evictions.

He did a lot in rehabilitating the released Indian National Army persons and liberally helped them. He made elaborate arrangements for their relief. He took a keen interest in the activities of Indian National Army Relief Committee and quite a good number of Indian National Army men got suitable jobs through him. Many were offered money to start business or other work. He sent a number of them to work for Congress candidates in elections and they did commendable work.

Role in Muslim Politics from 1936 till Partition

IN 1936, JINNAH undertook the task of reorganising the Muslim League. In this task he sought earnestly the co-operation of nationalist Muslims to purge the Muslim League of the reactionary and loyalist elements. In response to this appeal and clear assurances of M.A. Jinnah, a number of nationalist Muslim leaders—Ahrar, Jamait-ul-Ulema and Congress Muslim leaders joined the Muslim League and a number of their leaders like Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madni, Mufti Kifayatullah, Maulana Ahmad Saeed, Ch. Khaliquzzaman, Maulvi Mujibur Rehman of Bengal, Maulana Mohammad Sadiq of Sindh, Maulana Abdul Qadir Qusuri—the veteran Punjab Congress Muslim leader, Sheikh Abdul Majeed of Sindh, Malik Khuda Bakhsh, Khwaja Abdur Rehman Ghazi—another Congress Muslim leader of Punjab, Sheikh Hisamuddin and Ch. Afzal Haque—Ahrar leaders, Qazi Ahmad Hussain of Bihar, Maulana Sajjad—a prominent Jamait-ul-Ulema leader and Shareef of Nagpur were nominated as members of the Muslim League Central Parliamentary Boards as well as of Provincial Parliamentary Board. Though Rafi Ahmad himself kept out of the League, he persuaded a number of nationalist and Congress Muslims to join it in order to fight the loyalist and

reactionary Muslims and landlords who were fighting election under the National Agriculturists Party. He was responsible for a close understanding between the Congress and the Muslim League in U.P. This understanding was not in the form of any formal or written pact between the two organisations in U.P.. It was a sort of entente and was to the effect that both the organisations would fight the National Agriculturist Party. A number of nationalist Muslims contested election as League candidates. During his whirlwind tour of U.P. Pt. Nehru, the Congress President, had canvassed for the Muslim League candidates. It was expected that there would be a Congress League coalition ministry in U.P. as the Congress would not be able to secure more than 100 seats while the Muslim League's tally would be between 20 and 25. But the Congress score of 134 out of 228 was much beyond expectations. So no need was felt of any coalition between the Congress and the League by the majority of Congressmen. On account of the secret co-operation which existed between the two organisations, the League did not put up any candidate against Rafi Ahmad in the bye-election of U.P. Assembly from Bahraich, which took place soon after the elections and he was returned unopposed. After his election, he thought of a move which if had succeeded would have finished the Muslim League just as he had finished Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya's Congress Nationalist Party which was opposed to the Congress over the issue of the Communal Award. He got Ch. Khaliquzzaman—the leader of the U.P. Muslim League Party to agree to a formula by which the League was to join the Congress party in U.P. assembly and like the Malaviya's Congress Nationalist Party would retain the freedom to vote independently on any issue affecting the cultural and religious interests of Muslims. He agreed to the special indulgence for the League's merger with the Congress because he could hardly imagine any communal issue coming

up before the U.P. assembly under provincial autonomy. The Muslim share in the services had already been fixed, Urdu was safeguarded and the Congress had no intention of interfering with the Muslim Personal Law and endowments. There was no possibility of any fundamental difference between the Congress and the League on any Hindu-Muslim issue and there was to be no occasion for the League members in the Congress party to exercise their conceded right of dissent from the Congress party on any issue affecting Muslims. The only issue which could have come up before the assembly would have been the question of political and civil liberties, reduction in land rent, the protection of U.P.'s oppressed tenancy from the landlords by some reforms in the agrarian system of U.P. The League manifesto had also mentioned agrarian reforms. Thus Rafi Ahmad had by a shrewd stroke of political tactics eliminated the possibilities of a Hindu communal opposition in the shape of Malaviya's Nationalist Party and he was now engaged in a manoeuvre which would eliminate the possibility of Muslim communal opposition to a Congress ministry in U.P. This manoeuvre had been approved by Pt. Pant and Khaliquzzaman and it only remained to formalise the arrangements by both parties. Unfortunately, this time Rafi Ahmad failed in his manoeuvre. In the first place Jinnah was deadly opposed to this as any agreement between the Congress and the League went totally against his political ambition. He had revived the League on the philosophy of keeping equal distance both from the Congress and the British Government and he aimed at organising the Muslims as a separate force, with which the Congress would have to settle for the governance of the country. As the League had fared badly in Muslim majority provinces, excepting Bengal where it had secured 40 Muslim seats against 39 secured by Fazalul Haque's Praja Krishak Party, Jinnah's hope now rested with only U.P., Bombay, Madras and C.P.

where the League had won substantial number of Muslim seats. In Bombay and C.P. it had won overwhelming majority of Muslim seats in assemblies and in U.P. it had secured about 44 per cent of Muslim seats of the assembly. Pt. Nehru was opposed to this agreement as he had concluded from the sweeping victory of the Congress in U.P., Bihar, Madras, C.P. and Orissa, which he himself had helped to bring about, that this victory had eliminated all other forces and that the Congress was the sole representative body of all Indians. Of course, the Congress had not fared well in the Muslim seats but this he believed was due to Congress's own fault. He was hopeful that if the Congress wooed Muslim masses with its economic programme, they could be won over for the Congress. To him religious and cultural barriers between Hindus and Muslims were raised by propertied classes for their vested interests and that social and economic issues alone appealed to Hindu and Muslim masses. The Congress socialists of U.P., headed by Narendra Dev, whom Nehru held in high esteem, reinforced him in his conviction while Nehru's personal entourage of Muslim communist leaders namely Dr. K.M. Ashraf, Z.A. Ahmad and Mahmuduzzafar, who were all incharge of the various departments in the A.I.C.C. office at the time constantly dinned their pet theory into his ears, i.e. Muslim masses could easily be won for the Congress by its economic programmes and that they had no interest in cultural and religious issues which were raised by Muslim propertied classes. He had launched the Muslim mass contact programme and had put Dr. Ashraf its incharge. So Rafi Ahmad's manoeuvre with which he would have finished the Muslim League in U.P. assembly, failed. Some earlier incidents also worked for the failure of Rafi Ahmad's move.

Soon after the election, a controversy between Jinnah and Nehru had started when Jinnah had taken exception to

Nehru's statement that there were only two forces in the country confronting each other—the British Imperialism bent on holding India and the Congress bent on freeing India. According to Jinnah there was a third force, that is, of Muslims or the Muslim League. He had also made slighting remarks against Congress Muslims. This controversy had embittered Jinnah. When he came to know of the proposed Congress-League merger, he publicly disapproved of it.

Then again at the time of the formation of the interim ministry of U.P. headed by the Nawab of Chatari, the Raja of Salempur, the president of U.P. Muslim League Parliamentary Board had defected from the League to join the ministry and this had aroused suspicion among nationalist Muslims, as Jinnah in clear contravention of his earlier promises and assurances was willing to admit Muslim landlords in the Muslim League and negotiations about it had already started. As a protest against it Jamait leaders like Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madni and a number of nationalist Muslims had resigned from the Muslim League. The Raja of Salempur's resignation had provided this argument to Socialists and Communists who were opposed to the Congress-League coalition ministry that the League ministries would not resign if any constitutional crisis occurred (in case Congress framed ministries) and the Muslim League elements would tone down the economic and social radicalism of the Congress. Earlier, when the Congress had decided to observe a hartal throughout the country on 1 April 1937 to register its protest against the inauguration of provincial autonomy under which Governors had the real power, Jinnah had opposed it and had called upon Muslims not to participate in it. This had gone to widen the gulf between the Congress and the League. With the resolution of the deadlock between the Congress and the British Government in July 1937,

the Congress ministries were formed in the Congress majority provinces and Maulana Azad, the member incharge of U.P. affairs of the Congress parliamentary sub-committee again started negotiations with the leader of U.P. Muslim League Assembly party who demanded two seats in the U.P. Cabinet—one for himself and the other for the ex-Swarajist, Nawab Ismael Khan, the president of U.P. Muslim League. But Pt. Nehru, the Congress President, did not accept this proposal and the negotiations fell through. This was largely on account of the stiff opposition of the Congress socialists led by Acharya Narendra Dev, Babu Purushottam Das Tandon and Congress communists headed by Dr. Ashraf and Dr. Z. A. Ahmad. Nehru thought that the U.P. Congress having led the first mass agrarian movement in the country was now set for radical land reforms and the inclusion of the moderate-cum-conservative Muslim League elements would moderate the economic and social radicalisms of the Congress and that the Muslim masses could be wooed through the socio-economic programme of the Congress, for which the Muslim mass contact campaign had already been launched.

After the breakdown of the Congress-League negotiations, several Nationalist and Congress Muslims who had been elected to the U.P. Assembly on Muslim League ticket such as Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim, Iqbal Sohail, the renowned National Urdu poet, Qazi Adeel Abbasi, Sulaiman Ansari, Abdul Hakeem, Maulana Ismael of Sambhal and Saeeduddin Ahmad defected to the Congress from the Muslim League at Rafi Ahmad's instance.

The rupture between the Congress and the Muslim League over the coalition ministry in U.P. was, however, responsible for a new turn in the Indian politics. The League's popularity

spread among Muslims of all classes and it became a mass organisation after its Lucknow session of October 1937. It won a number of bye-elections to U.P. assembly excepting the historic Bijnaur bye election. Soon after the failure of League-Congress negotiations, Rafi Ahmad who conducted the election campaign of Nisar Ahmad Sherwani—a bye-election in Jhansi-Jalaun constituency, was the main target of Muslim League attacks. Nationalist and Congress Muslim and Jamait-ul-Ulema and Ahrar were also bitterly attacked by the Muslim League and all these including Rafi Ahmad were dubbed as 'renegades'.

The League now became the main opposition party to the Congress and it began to accuse the Congress of all kinds of imaginary delinquencies and wickedness and these accusations and wild charges were draped in communal colours, which made the gulf between Hindus and Muslims wider and led to the estrangement between the two communities. One reason of League's becoming so popular among Muslims was the support of the Muslim Civil Servants, Muslim landlords, the favour and support of the British Government and the exploitation of religious sentiments of Muslims by the Muslim League. The British Government was deeply alarmed by the spectacular success of the Congress in the elections and it immediately set to re-inforce its armoury in order to defeat the Congress purpose. It used the League successfully as a counter poise against the Congress. The bureaucracy which had considerable number of Britishers on it and was hostile to the Congress and was not under the effective control of Congress ministries, always sided with the Muslim League and used it against the Congress.

Congress ministries continued with their ameliorative programmes for masses and the Muslim League moved deeper

and deeper into the Muslim masses, proclaiming that a Hindu Raj had been established and that Muslims had been thrown over board. Condemnation of the Congress rule as a Hindu Raj portending dangerous consequences to Muslims was the central point of the League propaganda. Its intensely communal propaganda raised counter communal feelings among Hindus. The communal antagonism in cities which had the lion's share of the propaganda increased rapidly in U.P. and erupted in bitter riots at several places. Rafi Ahmad along with other Congress and Muslim nationalists was the main target of Muslim League. As he was the most powerful and popular Congress minister, he was severely condemned by the Muslim League as a 'renegade' and 'ghaddaar'. All sorts of wild allegations and charges were levelled against him. His greatest crime was that he was a front ranking Congress leader and the most powerful and popular minister. His other 'unpardonable' crime was that he had caused defections in the Muslim League. He bore this worst type of nasty and filthy propaganda against him calmly and remained quite unruffled and firm.

Rafi Ahmad was deadly opposed to the two-nation theory of the Muslim League and its demand for partition of the country or Pakistan made in March 1940 at its Lahore session. His opposition to the demand of Pakistan was based on practical considerations. He did not consider it to be logical and reasonable. He felt that for a scheme to be logical it should be based on principles which could be generally applicable. It was not so in the case of Pakistan, while Jinnah refused to believe that safeguards for Muslim minority in united India were enough and in the same breath he tried to reassure the non-Muslim minorities in Pakistan that they would have safeguards. He did not agree with Jinnah's contention that partition of the country in any way would solve the minority

problem. If it was possible to provide adequate safeguards for minorities, that could easily be done in a united India and there was, therefore, no need for dividing the country. If there could be no adequate safeguards then the division of the country would not help, for in each of the two states the minority problem would again crop up. To him, the League demand was full of contradictions. On the one hand, the League assured non-Muslim minorities of Pakistan full citizenship rights and on the other hand it denied to them the right to vote on partition question.

While he was incharge of the anti-war individual Satyagraha of 1940 in U.P., Rafi Ahmad contacted Maulana Habibur Rehman Ludhianvi, the Ahrar leader, and in consultation with Maulana Azad, the Congress President, it was decided that the Majlis-e-Ahrar would also join this movement. He also contacted the U.P. Ahrar leaders but soon after this agreement, all the three leaders were arrested. So nothing could be done in this regard. The participation of the Ahrar in the movement would have much weakened the Muslim League and would also have falsified the propaganda that Muslims were not in this movement.

After his release in July 1945, Rafi Ahmad began to mobilize Muslims against the Muslim League. The absence of the Congress for three long years had been fully exploited by the League and the Government had lent its full support to it. He was confident that the nationalist Muslims could give a tough fight to the League and that the districts of Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Basti, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnaur, Moradabad and Meerut which were the strongholds of Jamait-ul-Ulema, Majlis-i-Ahrar and the Momin Conference would return Congress and nationalist Muslim candidates. He attended

a meeting of the Congress and nationalist Muslim leaders convened by the Jamait-ul-Ulema in Delhi at which it was decided to set up a Joint Parliamentary Board representing all the anti-League Muslim parties. Rafi Ahmad took a prominent part in the deliberations of the meeting and made a number of valuable suggestions which were accepted and it was agreed that Provincial Parliamentary Boards consisting of representatives of all non-League Muslim parties should be set-up. In U.P. a Nationalist Muslim Parliamentary Board was set up on these lines after a conference of U.P. nationalist Muslims was held in Lucknow. Rafi Ahmad rendered all possible help in holding the conference. Congress and nationalist workers, not only from U.P. but also from other parts of the country, flocked at his Lucknow residence to seek his guidance and assistance. He helped them in every possible way. In response to his call, a number of Ahrar leaders and workers from the Punjab and N.W.F.P. campaigned for the Congress and nationalist Muslim candidates in U.P. and Bihar.

He thoroughly surveyed the position of the Congress in the forthcoming elections. He was sure that the Congress would sweep the polls in general or non-Muslim constituencies but about the Muslim seats he feared that the Congress and nationalist Muslim candidates would not fare well in a majority of constituencies largely on account of open official patronage to the League and threats which would be given to Muslim peasants. Moreover, the malicious League propaganda had done havoc with Muslim masses during the absence of the Congress and nationalist Muslims in jail and the official patronage of the League had put it in an advantageous position. As such the nationalist Muslims found themselves greatly handicapped in many ways. Muslim peasants, artisans and working classes had been excluded from the voters' list as they were

the vote-banks of the Congress and nationalist Muslims. Rafi Ahmad succeeded in getting the electoral roll of U.P. revised and thus those who had been excluded were included in it. It was also brought to his notice that the police and the Muslim officials were openly supporting the Muslim League candidates against which he strongly protested.

During those stormy days of 1945-46, when the League propaganda had assumed ugly forms of hooliganism, rowdyism and fanaticism as a result of which Muslim youth and young-men had been led astray, the author, then a student of Lucknow University, with the help of some of his friends formed the U.P. Nationalist Muslim Students Federation to fight the Muslim League on the student front and Rafi Ahmad not only welcomed the formation of this organisation but also encouraged and helped it in every possible way. It was largely because of his patronage and guidance that the organisation was formed and it could carry on its activities. It was during those stormy days that the author came into his close contact and was very deeply influenced by him. It was largely because of him that he succeeded in establishing the branches of the Federation in many districts of U.P.

The entire burden of directing the election campaign had fallen on Rafi Ahmad as he was the convener of U.P. Congress Parliamentary Board. During those days when he was in Lucknow, he was besieged from the very early hours of the morning till midnight or even late hours in the night by swarms of political workers who came from distant places with numerous problems connected with the election, i.e. about money, transport, sending of workers and speakers to different constituencies etc. and he solved all these problems to their satisfaction.

The Government was using all possible means to prevent the Congress from coming back to power and was interfering with elections especially in Muslim constituencies and the Congress and nationalist Muslim candidates had to fight against very heavy odds.

Rafi Ahmad undertook a whirlwind tour of the province and due to high speed of his car, of which he was extremely fond of, he met with not less than half a dozen accidents including a serious one in December 1945. These tours were not an easy job. It was risky to address Muslims whose communal passions had been deeply aroused and before whom he had been depicted as a 'renegade', 'Ghaddar' or a traitor to the community, a paid agent of Hindus and even as a heretic. But unconcerned and unperturbed, he carried on the battle against all heavy odds. He strongly condemned the League policy and its demand for partition. He drew the attention of Muslim masses to the complete absence of any economic programme in the League election manifesto and to the fact that only big Zamindars and landlords had been selected by it as its candidates. He pointed out that such persons could not represent the poor among Muslims and they could not support the Congress agrarian programme which included the abolition of Zamindari System. He told them that the Congress had been fighting for the freedom of the country for the last 60 years while the League had made no sacrifice in the freedom struggle and it had not even participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement and it had no economic programme to serve the poor. To him Pakistan was an impossible proposition and the League leaders harped on it in order to divert the attention of Muslims from the real issues of freedom and poverty because these would endanger their personal interests. The League Workers disrupted meetings of the Congress and nationalist

Muslims as they were afraid lest reason and truth should win the Muslim masses for the Congress. He warned the Muslims of the disastrous consequences of Pakistan as a result of which Muslims in Hindu majority provinces would be reduced to the status similar to that of Indians in Burma after its separation from India. They would be treated as aliens in their own country. He also pointed out to the great and unforgettable contribution of Muslims to the cause of national freedom and to the irreparable loss to which Muslim culture would be put to in case of partition. If Sikhs in the Punjab who constituted 14 per cent of the total population of the province were to enjoy weightage of 30 per cent in Punjab legislature like Muslims in U.P., the Sikh and Hindu combination would reduce the Muslim majority to a minority of 40 per cent. In order to perpetuate their rule, the British Government had been exploiting the Muslim League. It had played the same game in Ireland and Egypt. The League stood in the way of India's freedom. Landlords, big Zamindars and title holders who dominated the Muslim League were all exploiting the religious sentiments of Muslims for the maintenance of their class domination. The hymn of hate against the Hindus was being sung to drown the urge of Muslims for freedom and to distract them from economic issues.

This sort of election campaign, which laid stress on the economic programme and exposed the League tactics was carried by the Congress and nationalist Muslims under the guidance of Rafi Ahmad and had very much frightened the Muslim League and its workers resorted to hooliganism and violence and use of physical force. Congress and nationalist Muslim workers were attacked and their meetings disrupted and the district authorities usually connived with the League and took no action against it. Rafi Ahmad and other Congress Muslim leaders were the main targets of the League attack. A

highly organised campaign of wild allegations, vilification, canard, insinuation and baseless stories was launched against him and other Congress Muslims, Jamait and Ahrar leaders. Against Rafi Ahmad this canard was spread that those who saw him were given money by him and that huge funds, contributed by Hindu capitalists and industrialists, were at his disposal to purchase Muslim votes. The author was also charged with purchasing Muslim youngmen and students. When narrated all this to Rafi Ahmad, he laughed at these canards and advised not to feel offended but to carry on the work undeterred.

On the directions of Rafi Ahmad we sent teams of nationalist Muslim students to different constituencies of U.P. to work for the Congress and nationalist Muslim candidates. Rafi Ahmad was contesting from Gonda, Bahraich and Rae Bareli constituencies. But he neglected his constituencies and did not pay any visit to them. On account of malpractices such as tampering with ballot boxes, open voting at many polling booths, false propaganda, open interferences in election and partiality for the League candidates by the district authorities, Rafi Ahmad and the majority of Congress and nationalist Muslim candidates could not win.

However, the nationalist Muslim candidates polled more than 35 per cent of Muslim votes and won 12 Muslim seats of U.P. Assembly. This performance of nationalist Muslim candidates falsified the tall claim of the Muslim League that it represented all the Muslims.

After the election, Rafi Ahmad worked to win over as many Muslims to the Congress fold as possible. The U.P. Congress Committee appointed a Muslim mass contact committee with Rafi Ahmad as its Chairman which under his

and the general secretary of Jamait-ul-Ulema Maulana Hafizur Rehman's guidance came out with a number of very good suggestions which included the redressal of legitimate grievances of Muslims.

At the initiative of Rafi Ahmad a comprehensive programme for holding district conferences of Muslims throughout the province for stressing communal peace and harmony and explaining the harmful and disastrous consequences of partition was drawn up by the committee. Teams of workers of nationalist Muslim Students Federation, headed by Jamait and other nationalist Muslim leaders and members of the sub-committee, were to undertake extensive tour of the province for this purpose. The committee would have definitely succeeded in its objective of bringing a large number of U.P. Muslims into the Congress fold by holding conferences but for the fast changing political situation in the country and the deteriorating communal situation which culminated in the eruption of terrible communal violence at Calcutta, Noakhali, Garh Mukteshwar and in different parts of Bihar and finally the partition of the country.

Rafi Ahmad clearly foresaw the disastrous and tragic consequences of the partition of the motherland. To him Pakistan meant the division of the common land, of the common heritage and culture and therefore he opposed it tooth and nail. As a man of vision he could foresee the destruction of our highly precious national composite culture. In February 1947 he asked the author to arrange a meeting of some sober members of Muslim Students Federation and the author arranged this meeting in his chamber in the council house. He predicted the horrible consequences of the great tragedy which was to take place in the form of the partition of the country and the miserable plight of Indian Muslims there-

after [and exactly all which he had predicted, unfortunately happened]. He silenced the zealous supporters of the Muslim League who could not refute the very strong arguments which Rafi Ahmad advanced against partition. He exposed at length the bungling of Muslim League Leadership and its unflinching loyalty to the British Government and the heavy blow it had given to Indian Muslims.

After partition, Rafi Ahmad was among those Congress Muslim leaders who tried their best to boost up the morale of the Indian Muslims who had been greatly demoralised and tried his best to rehabilitate them mentally and emotionally. He exhorted them to give up defeatist mentality and shun communalism.

During the Delhi disturbances of 1947, hundreds of Muslims took refuge in his house which had virtually become a refugee camp. He did every thing possible for them and looked after all their basic needs. He managed to shift them to safer places and made arrangements for those who wanted to go to Pakistan by getting railway or air tickets for many of them. Those who went to Pakistan left their belongings for their relatives and friends in India and Rafi Ahmad got them delivered. He even took pains in finding the whereabouts and safety of a number of Muslim families of Delhi and inform about this to their relatives at other places. One family of Lucknow made enquiries about the welfare of their relatives who resided in some Kucha of Daryaganj Area (through the author) from Rafi Ahmad, who informed that the family had safely flown to Pakistan.

During those dark days it appeared imminent that communal peace in U P. would be disturbed. At a meeting of leading nationalist Muslim leaders and workers, attended by

leaders of Jamait-ul-Ulema, Nationalist Muslim Students Federation and other nationalists, Rafi Ahmad called upon Muslims not to become desperate but work for communal peace and unity by seeking the help of non-communal and nationalist Hindus and help the refugees who were coming to U.P. in large numbers. Accordingly, a number of meetings were organised in Lucknow under the auspices of Nationalist Muslim Students Federation and Jamait-ul-Ulema in which emphasis was laid on the maintenance of communal peace and harmony. Nationalist Muslims joined the Citizens Relief Committee, which had been formed by Messers Gopi Nath Srivastava, Triloki Singh—U.P. Congress leaders of liberal outlook and close confidants of Rafi Ahmad to render relief to refugees. This committee did commendable work and this was also one of the reasons why Lucknow remained free from any communal trouble.

Rafi Ahmad was also strongly opposed to the idea of a separate political organisation of Muslims. He feared that such an organisation would soon pass into the hands of rank communalists which would be more harmful to Muslims in post-independent secular India. He was convinced that communalism could not be defeated by counter-communalism. And this exactly happened when Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat was formed in 1964. He strongly felt that the future of Indian Muslims lay safe in strengthening the forces of secular democracy. To him communalism of every kind, especially Hindu communalism which had become more militant and aggressive after partition, constituted the gravest menace to Indian secular democracy and freedom and this could be fought and defeated through nationalism and secularism alone. He was one with the decision of All-India Muslim Conference, convened by Maulana Azad in December 1947 in Lucknow suggesting that

Muslims should give up communal politics and join secular parties in large numbers.

After partition, he was praised even by those who were once bitterly opposed to him and his political ideas. They realised how correct his political views and stand were and how fatal and harmful the policies of the Muslim League proved. His devotion to the cause of India's freedom, nationalism, secularism and communal harmony, his success as the Home Minister of U.P., his miraculous success as a Food Minister, his unforgettable services to the country, his sincerity and his crusade for justice and fair play for the down-trodden endeared him to the majority of Muslim masses. They were convinced about the correctness of his political stand, spoke highly of him and concurred with his views. In him they saw the real benefactor of the community and the nation as a whole who carried on an unabated crusade against narrow-mindedness and communalism.

As Home Minister of U.P.

IN THE U.P. Congress Ministry, formed in April 1946, Rafi Ahmad held the most important portfolio of Home and had the unique distinction of being the first Muslim Home Minister in a predominantly Hindu majority Province. The first order which he issued as the Home Minister was for the release of all political prisoners. By then, over 800 such prisoners had been released, but the Governor refused to give his consent to the release of about 200 long-term prisoners connected with Madhuban Thana Raid Case and burning of Police Stations cases at Ghazipur, Lakhimpur and Banaras. This threatened a constitutional crisis. Ultimately, on the intervention of the Viceroy, the Governor had to yield and all these prisoners were released.

Rafi Ahmad introduced revolutionary reforms in Jails which aimed at making prisoners better citizens and transforming of jails into reformatories. The hard labour convicts were now to do lighter work. For instance, wheat for grinding was reduced from 15 to 10 seers, water pumping hours were reduced by three hours and *moonj* carding by five seers. Relatives and friends of prisoners could now supply a limited quantity of soap, tooth powder, hair oil, *bidis* and tobacco to prisoners and even newspapers and books. Sick prisoners were

allowed to have extra milk at their own cost. A novel concession which now the prisoners could enjoy was that they could get a better class by paying off the difference in expenditure of the two classes. Rafi Ahmad felt convinced that the jail staff was over worked and it needed some relief. He, therefore, ordered an increase in their rations and issued orders that they should have night and evening off once a week. Thus for the first time, the jail staff had a long awaited relief.

The army and the police had committed horrible atrocities on the people of Ballia and other eastern districts of U.P. during the 'Quit India' Movement. Collective punitive fines had been levied on villages and realised through very harsh methods. Not only the houses of people had been destroyed but also a number of villages had been razed to the ground. Property of those who had participated in the movement had been confiscated. Rafi Ahmad, on assuming the charge of Home Ministership, took the bold step of refunding the collective fines. He also ordered for the payment of adequate compensation to the sufferers for the loss and damages.

A large number of Kisans who had taken part in the 'Quit India' Movement had been deprived of their lands and their houses had been auctioned. Since under the existing laws it was not possible to put back expropriated persons into possessions of their houses and other property, Rafi Ahmad brought forward before the legislature the 'Restoration of Lands and Houses Bill' and got it enacted. Thus those who had lost their houses and lands got them back.

Rafi Ahmad was fully aware of the unfortunate fact that the U.P. Police was not free from communal prejudices and on that account did not act impartially on testing occasions which

further intensified communal antagonism. He, therefore, issued orders for the recruitment of the INA personnel in police as a new element which was free from such shortcomings and which could be relied upon on the occurrences of communal riots. Had he remained as the Home Minister of U.P. longer, he would have succeeded in overhauling the police department and the province would have been saved from the frequent outbreak of fierce communal riots.

To combat forces of lawlessness and disorder and to have a spirit of discipline among the educated, he issued orders for the establishment of Civic Guard Organisation which was to serve as a reserve force. It was supposed to help the police in the maintenance of peace. Only educated persons, preferably graduates between the age of 21 and 23, were to be recruited. But before much could be done to expand this department, he was shifted to Delhi as the Union Communications Minister.

In 1946-47, the communal situation in U.P. had deteriorated on account of the constant poisonous communal propaganda of the Muslim League. After the observance of Direct Action Day in August 1946, it worsened further and fierce riots occurred at a number of places in U.P. and the worst was at Garh Mukteshwar in Meerut district where hundreds were killed in a *Mela*. Rafi Ahmad took very stern measures to curb the rising tide of communal riots. He imposed punitive collective tax on the community other than that community whose members had been victims of communal frenzy in any particular area. The administrative authorities were required to maintain permanently a list of anti-social elements, bad characters and history-sheeters in every locality and in the event of occurrences of communal riots had to round them up. The representative vigilance committees, composed of all

communities were formed to carry on vigorous propaganda against acts of violence and to emphasise the need to maintain communal peace and harmony at all costs. As soon as he received the news of any communal disturbance, he reached the riot affected areas in no time and himself saw every thing and did not rely on official reports. He had little faith in official statements and statistics and disliked the rotten bureaucratic ways.

Through his stern and ruthless measures, Rafi Ahmad succeeded in quelling communal disturbances quickly and on this account he earned name for being strong and the most efficient Home Minister. He won the praise of all by enforcing the riot scheme sponsored by him. U.P. was saved from communal holocaust which had affected Delhi and Punjab during the most critical pre-partition period and the period immediately following it and this is the greatest achievement of Rafi Ahmad and will remain a monument to his great administrative ability. It was indeed a miracle that U.P. which happened to be a great stronghold of the Muslim League remained free from communal holocaust and this was solely due to Rafi Ahmad's stern measures, especially because of his anti-riot scheme. During the long drawn Delhi disturbances of September 1947, Gandhiji advised Sardar Patel to consult Rafi Ahmad for putting an end to the communal disturbances which had been going on continuously for four months in Delhi. Rafi Ahmad was firmly of the view that one of the most effective ways of curbing riots and meeting any emergency was to arm the police with modern weapons. Accordingly, the U.P. police were armed with machine guns and instructors from the army were requisitioned to train the U.P. special armed constabulary in the use of such arms. Experts were also appointed to draw up plans for the protection of Government

buildings, particularly isolated police stations in rural areas against possible attacks by hostile mobs.

He strongly felt the need and necessity of not only reorganising but overhauling the police department as despite the establishment of popular rule, the department had not changed and still persisted in its old corrupt and oppressive methods. He appointed a committee of the members of U.P. Legislature and others having adequate knowledge about police affairs to recommend measures for overhauling the entire police machinery. He even thought of changing the existing system of lodging the First Information Report. It was to be lodged with some other police office than the police station and the office had to forward the report and also cases of bribery and corruption lodged to higher authorities for necessary action. He took strong action against corrupt and negligent officials and nobody, even his closest colleagues and lieutenants, dared speak in favour of the guilty or plead their cases. This had an exemplary effect and during his tenure of Home Ministership, U.P. Police was noted for its efficiency and good record.

He decided to move ahead on the previous U.P. Tenancy Act and other legislations pertaining to agrarian reforms, passed during 1937-39 aimed at Zamindari abolition, which formed a part of the Congress election manifesto and created favourable conditions for it. Now both landlords and the Muslim League joined hands in bringing all sorts of pressures on the Congress not to proceed with the Zamindari abolition but to give it up. Even open threats of civil war and bloodshed were given in case the Congress tried to abolish the Zamindari System. But these threats had no effect on Rafi Ahmad and he remained quite unmoved and unruffled. He made it abundantly clear that the Congress stood committed to the abolition

of Zamindari System as the policy regarding it had been clearly laid down in its election manifesto. The U.P. Congress ministry was therefore determined to implement it as early as possible and it could not give way until the tenancy interests of the millions of Kisans remained unsolved.

In August 1946, he moved the following resolution in the U.P. Assembly :

“The Assembly accepts the principle of abolition of Zamindari System in U.P. Province, which involves intermediaries between the cultivators and the state and resolves that the rights of such intermediaries should be acquired on the payment of equitable compensation and that the Government should appoint a committee to prepare a scheme for the purpose.”

In the debate over this revolutionary resolution which envisaged the end of the centuries old oppressive Zamindari System, Rafi Ahmad proved himself more than a match for his opponents. The resolution was passed by the U.P. Assembly by an overwhelming majority. The Muslim League members clamoured for the liquidation of capitalism. They charged that the Congress was the great champion of the rights and interests of capitalists and that was why it had not moved a similar resolution for the abolition of capitalism. In order to repudiate this charge Rafi Ahmad declared that the Government had decided to bring another resolution dealing with the abolition of capitalism, which read as follows :

“The Assembly is of the opinion that the liquidation of capitalism is essential to the well being of society and trusts that necessary steps to bring about the socialization

of the principal means of production, exchange and distribution will be taken as soon as possible.”

The Zamindari abolition resolution was a revolutionary measure. Despite manoeuvres of all kinds, dialatory tactics and obstructions, not only the resolution was passed but soon after the U.P. Zamindari abolition bill on the lines of this resolution was also moved in the assembly by Rafi Ahmad. Both the Zamindar and the Muslim League members vigorously opposed the bill and they even boycotted the proceedings of the U.P. Assembly to proceed with the legislation as tyranny of the majority. But despite these tactics of opposition parties, the bill was passed by both the houses of legislature and the Congress fulfilled its promise of abolishing the centuries old oppressive Zamindari System which was responsible for the untold misery of the tenancy. Rafi Ahmad was quite mindful of the great hardship which the abolition of Zamindari system would entail for Zamindars and their families. A Committee, therefore, was appointed by the assembly to recommend a new system of land tenure and rent collection which was to replace the Zamindari System. He also requested the Zamindars to appoint a committee of their representatives to recommend what alternative methods of earning livelihood for them could be found but they did not respond to his gesture.

The passage of the Zamindari abolition bill by U.P. Assembly was one of the greatest and most splendid achievements of Rafi Ahmad. Through this revolutionary measure the centuries old oppressive Zamindari System which had reduced the U.P. tenancy to abject poverty and exploitation of the worst kind and was responsible for their miserable plight and extreme backwardness was abolished along with all the

traces of feudalism. This was the first step towards the establishment of a socialist society and now ushered in an era of prosperity for the teeming millions of U.P. who had been tied to the soil and had been subjected to hardship. They were freed from the strangle hold of the landed aristocracy and from tyranny and oppression of the worst kind. Undoubtedly, this was a great stride towards social revolution. Credit for all this should go to Rafi Ahmad.

A new splinter group in the U.P. Congress, known as the Congress Kisan Party, was formed under the patronage of Rafi Ahmad. He strongly felt the need of such a group which could stop the rot in the Congress and save it from becoming a conservative political party. All his lieutenants and confidants like S.K.D. Paliwal, Keshav Dev Malaviya, Triloki Singh, Gopi Nath Srivastava, Govind Sahai, Gopal Narain Saxena, Jagan Prasad Rawat, Salig Ram Tandon, Radhey Shyam Pathak, Ganga Sahai Chaube and Jogendra Singh joined it, with Triloki Singh as its energetic secretary. This group was to fight for the achievement of complete independence, adoption of a socialist and radical programme by the Congress and establishment of a society wherein there would be no exploitation of man by man and in which the means of production and exchange would be held in common ownership. Its main aim was to bring all that it could gather to influence the policy of both the Congress organisation as well as the Government to adopt the socialist programme and progressive policies as advocated by it. It was to fight reaction and corruption. It was to respect, implement and popularise the decisions of the parent organisation—the Congress. Only those who were primary members of the Congress could be its members. This group was quite popular as was evident from this fact that as many as 300 members of U.P. Provincial Congress Committee

and 80 members of U.P. Assembly and a number of office bearers of District and City Congress Committees joined it. It remained quite active for some time and did commendable work to popularise socialist and radical programmes in U.P. and it put up a good fight against reaction.

In July 1946, Rafi Ahmad was elected as a member of the Constituent Assembly from U.P. and at that time he was the sole non-League member of the assembly from U.P. and regularly attended its sessions.

As in 1937, he was the most popular, powerful and easily accessible minister. Not less than four to five hundred visitors saw him daily at his residence and in his office and they came with all sorts of problems—domestic, political and social. Some came asking for money for their daughters' or sisters' marriages, others for the promotion of their sons, nephews or son-in-laws, a large number for employment or service while quite a good number about the admission of their sons or daughters or nephews to schools, colleges and Universities. Students approached him for financial assistance for the grant of some scholarship or for getting some financial assistance for going abroad for higher studies and political workers for transfer of their friends or for some other work. Some sought his help for the admission of their wives or relatives to hospitals or T.B. Sanitorium. A number of Congressmen and members of other parties sought his help in various matters and they got it. What was amazing that he kept no record of his visitors but not only he recognised them from their first names but he also remembered all the details of their problems and would do whatever he could before a visitor paid his next visit and in this his prodigious memory greatly helped him. No problem of any visitor ever baffled him. The author has the personal

knowledge that a number of students of Lucknow University and other educational institutions received generous financial help from Rafi Ahmad. Same was the case with a number of political workers. The author had personal experience of the financial help which he and his friends received from Rafi Ahmad at the time of holding or organising conferences or meetings of the Students Federation, Students Congress and Nationalist Muslim Students Federation. He not only gave money but also helped in many ways. For instance, it was he who pressed Congress leaders to accept our invitations for presiding over or inaugurating our conferences. We could hold a number of conferences before the 'Quit India' Movement and from 1945 till he moved to Delhi because of his help and guidance. In January 1946, the Lucknow Nationalist Muslim Students Federation celebrated the death anniversary of Maulana Mohammad Ali and Rafi Ahmad lent his full support to the author and his other friends in organising this meeting. It was because of his active support that we succeeded in organising the branches of U.P. Nationalist Muslim Students Federation in 1945-46 and the workers of the Federation could go to different parts of the province to work for the Congress and Nationalist Muslim candidates. Not only political workers but also a number of other persons belonging to all communities received financial help from him regularly. He financed a number of newspapers and in this cause he was very liberal.

In October 1946, there was some trouble in Lucknow between students and cinema owners over students concessional tickets and this led to hostile student demonstration before the Council Chamber and arrest of several hundred of students. There was no police lathi charge on students. Rafi Ahmad visited these student prisoners in jail who made demands to him for the supply of cigarettes and sweets and within minutes

they got these things in abundance and the matter was also amicably settled within two or three days.

A number of prominent leaders and workers of other political parties consulted him on political matters and were guided by him. In practically every political party, there were such persons who were devoted to him and those persons were considered to be his 'yes men'. It was said of him that he had his men in all political parties—the Taluqadar's Association (the association of Oudh Landlords), Muslim League, the Socialist and Communist parties.

As Union Communications Minister

IT WAS MOST unfortunate and distressing that on the eve of the partition of the country, Rafi Ahmad's political opponents in the Congress, some of whom themselves had pronounced communal leanings, started a whispering campaign against him though they could not cite a single instance of his being a communalist. They started this campaign against a person who throughout his political career had given the toughest fight to Muslim communalism and who had always been a staunch nationalist. They had no hesitation in joining hands with communalists and at their instance the Hindu Maha Sabha—the militant Hindu organisation which had been rejected by the U.P. electorate, launched a movement for his removal from the Home Ministership of U.P. It was contended by these Congress leaders that no Muslim whatever his past or credential, could inspire trust in the majority community. A number of secret meetings were held at Naini Tal where the communalist Congress leaders more vigorously reiterated their demand for his removal from the Home Ministership of U.P. As their campaign gained momentum, Rafi Ahmad's position became awkward. Nehru, sensing this unpleasantness, pulled him out of this befouled atmosphere of U.P. and inducted him in the

Central Cabinet of free India on 15 August 1947, as the Communications Minister.

Rafi Ahmad was sad for leaving Lucknow, where he had spent a fairly long period of his life and which he loved very much and had always remembered it while being in Delhi. After joining the Union Cabinet, he continued to pay frequent visits to Lucknow and took usual keen interest in U.P. politics. His political opponents were always afraid of him and his loyal lieutenants, whom they nick named as 'Raffians'. However, he soon adjusted himself to the new surroundings in Delhi.

Commonmen and the majority of U.P. Congressmen were really dismayed over Rafi Ahmad's departure from U.P. He was given a hearty send off. One such touching function was arranged in Lucknow University by the Nationalist Muslim Students Federation in which a number of its workers broke down while bidding him farewell.

But his inclusion in the Union Cabinet enabled him to take more active interest in the national politics and for over seven years he served the country with more devotion, dedication and with a missionary zeal which made him find a great place in the history of our country. Nehru needed him most at that time at the Centre, as he was facing difficulties both in the Government as well as in the Congress organisation and Rafi Ahmad's induction into the Union Cabinet very much strengthened Nehru's hands—frustrating the fond hopes of those who had thought that Rafi Ahmad who had become a big force to reckon with in U.P. would be reduced to insignificance. On the vast canvas of the Indian political scene, he shone in the Indian political firmament with added glow.

In October 1947, Rafi Ahmad faced one of the greatest calamities. His younger brother, Shafi Ahmad Kidwai, who

had alongwith him joined the national struggle and had all along been in it and to whom, whenever in distress, he opened out his heart and who was more than a brother—a brother and a friend combined, became a victim of communal outrage and was assassinated at Mussorie where he worked as the Executive Officer of the Municipal Board. This tragedy was the greatest shock to Rafi Ahmad. He was overwhelmed with profound grief but he bore this irreparable loss apparently unmoved, which was a rare example of extreme fortitude. His face remained clam but his heart bled and for weeks he could not sleep at night but wept in the memory of his dear brother. After his death in one of his pockets was found the blood-stained pen of his brother which was on his person when he was murdered. Rafi Ahmad was a rare example of one who remained true to his deeds and did more than all the legal and moral behests in fostering national fraternity, unity and communal harmony.

During the worst Delhi disturbances of 1947, his residence had become a camp of homeless Muslim families. There was round the clock service of food from his kitchen. Afflicted persons and sufferers with all sorts of problems and complaints came to him and got ready response. If their relatives were missing, Rafi Ahmad sent his men to search the lost persons. He also won the confidence of Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan, who narrated to him their horrible tales of woes and took to him their problems which he always tried to solve, and helped them in very many ways. During those days, one Hindu family, hailing from N.W.F.P., sought his help in getting the transit of one aged member of their family from there and he contacted Mr. Abdul Qaiyum Khan, the then Chief Minister of N.W.F.P. and got him repatriated to Delhi.

He was fortunate in having Khursheed Lal—one of his close friends and trusted lieutenants and a veteran leader from U.P. and Raj Bahadur, a Congress leader of standing from Rajasthan, who were very capable administrators and skilled parliamentarians, as his deputies or junior colleagues who faithfully carried out all his behests. In Pai, the Secretary of his ministry, H.L. Jairath, the Director General of Posts and Telegraphs and T. P. Bhalla, the Director General of Civil Aviation, he had very capable and efficient officers. The first matter which received his special attention was how to expedite the delivery of mails and he thought of utilizing the country's aircrafts for taking the mails at night. This was the most positive idea but at the same time it was a risky and costly experiment. But this did not, in any way, deter him from pursuing it. All the big private air companies were deadly opposed to this scheme and refused to cater to it. They even tried to scare him with arguments that night landings were not feasible and that the service would not pay but Rafi Ahmad maintained stoutly that night landings were entirely feasible and when the airlines joined hands against him, he smashed up their ring by giving this contract to an exiled Nepalese Rana in Calcutta, who was running a small airline known as the 'Himalyan Air Lines', to operate the night service. Thus peeved, the airline operators led by leading capitalists, who owned major airline companies of the country, carried a raging propaganda against him in the capitalist-controlled national press and launched a big attack on him in the Parliament. But Rafi Ahmad demolished with his granite strength and conviction all the arguments of his opponents and on 30 January 1949 the night Air Mail Service linking up the principal cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Delhi and Nagpur was introduced amidst misgivings and doubts. This scheme, a child of Rafi Ahmad's genius, was a brilliant solution to a pressing national

problem which soon found acceptance all over the world. The problem of trained pilots was solved by employing the Polish crews as long as the Indian pilots were not trained. Soon the Night Air Mail Service was followed by the still more revolutionary scheme of 'All-up Air Mail Service'. Thus Rafi Ahmad revolutionised the whole mail system of the country and this scheme which he had launched in the teeth of opposition of technical experts and of air companies and their proprietors, the big Indian capitalists, was a grand success all due to his sharp common sense and organising ability. The scheme was hailed as an ingenious and highly invaluable revolutionary innovation as it shortened the period of postal transmission. This facility was applauded by the business community and economic experts as a very effective means to speed up the pace of economic development.

The air mail service meant more aeroplanes, more trained pilots and more staff and Rafi Ahmad made strenuous efforts to have all these things and finally succeeded in achieving what he desired.

He thought of taking the help of flying clubs also to drop mail bags at smaller places where landing ground existed. He took a keen interest in the activities of flying clubs and earmarked a substantial amount in the budget of his ministry as a subsidy to flying and gliding clubs. These clubs trained hundreds of pilots whose number went on increasing. In order to promote air-mindedness among young men he started model aeroplane clubs in different universities and colleges. On his initiative an Aeronautical Society was formed for promoting the profession of aeronautics. He succeeded in getting the approval of the Union Cabinet for the construction of more aerodromes. Night landing facilities were provided at many important air routes. The remarkable progress made by Civil

Aviation under his stewardship is evident from the following figures. The total mileage of air routes increased by more than four and a half times. It increased from 5,264 in 1939 to 22,952 in 1949. External air services were also operated at his instance by Air-India International. These were some of his most notable achievements as a Union Minister of Communications. In order to solve the problem of the shortage of the trained personnel, he got a training school opened.

He strongly favoured nationalisation of air lines and made up his mind for it. But he did not live to see the achievement of this goal of which he had laid the foundation. However, a few years after his death all the air companies were nationalised. The credit, therefore, must go to him for sponsoring this revolutionary idea.

The entire trade, commerce and industry of a country thrives on communications on which account telephones are of vital importance. Unfortunately, when Rafi Ahmad took over as the Communications Minister of Government of India, the telephone density in India was far less than that of Egypt (which had roughly 1/17 of India's population), China and many other countries of Asia, which, excepting China, were much smaller in population and lacked Indian resources. There were very heavy demands for telephones from industrialists, businessmen and others in the country but the Communications Ministry could not cope with these both on account of shortage of lines and paucity of telephone apparatus which was again due to very little amount of money that had been provided in the budget of the Ministry of Communications. For this Rafi Ahmad could not allow the commerce and industry of the country to suffer because of the lack of this essential facility i.e. telephone and he soon came out with a wonderful plan which could not only fulfil the demands of those who needed telephones but even

would bring money to his ministry which would further enable him to come out with other new schemes and go to make his ministry both resourceful and self sufficient. Thus the "Own your Telephone Scheme" came into existence. Each allottee was to deposit Rs. 2000/- with the post office in lieu of which he was to get a telephone free of charge for the first 20 years paying only Rupees three per mensem as maintenance charges. For surplus calls he was to pay the extra money at the cost of 1 anna 6 pies per call or about 10 paise. This scheme did wonders and the rush for deposits far exceeded both expectations and targets. Soon the ministry had so much funds that Rafi Ahmad laid the foundation stone of the Telephone Industries near Bangalore to manufacture communication equipments, such as telephone instruments, switch boards and this was to save for the country the much needed foreign exchange. He prepared a gigantic project and the factory was to meet all the requirements of the country in telephones and make itself self sufficient. He also pooled the resources of all communication manufacturing concerns in India including the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Workshop in order to utilize and use all the national resources in the best possible manner. A Five Year Plan was prepared covering the manufacture of all telephone exchange equipments, carrier apparatus and he came out with the statement that India would achieve self-sufficiency in telecommunication equipment and this prophecy proved to be true as India has been self-sufficient in telecommunication equipment since long—solely on account of the master planner's initiative. Another remarkable and useful innovation introduced by him in telephone system was the message rate system in all the big cities. Instead of the fixed monthly rent which included the monthly rent for apparatus as well as the charges for calls made by them, the subscriber had to pay for every call which originated from his telephone besides paying the fixed

monthly rent for 'apparatus'. This system was more equitable as the subscriber had to pay according to the use he made of his telephone. Under this system unnecessary calls were avoided. Another advantage of this system was less load on the exchange.

He got wireless transmitters installed at Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Lucknow, Patna and Nagpur to speed up communication between different parts of the country. It was during his stewardship of the Communications Ministry that for the first time telephone and other communication links were also established with Kashmir.

When Rafi Ahmad became the Communications Minister, most of the Indian villages had no postal facility. In most of the rural areas, people had to cover distances of as much as 5 or even 10 miles to transact business at a post office. In order to provide postal facilities to the rural people, a large number of post offices were opened. Each village with a population of 2,000 or above was to have a post office. About those villages which had smaller population, his instructions were that none residing in a village should ordinarily have to walk more than five miles to transact business at a post office. For those who resided in scattered villages, he introduced a novel experiment of 'Post Office on Wheels' or mobile post offices and for this motor vans were converted into mobile post offices. Still there remained a number of villages which could not have postal facilities. For such villages he introduced the innovation of 'Dak Sewaks', who were postmasters-cum-postmen-cum-mail carriers. They were to bring mails from the nearest railway station or post offices on their cycles in the morning, distribute registered letters and money orders in the day and take the mail back in the afternoon to the

railway station or the post office. But soon practically all the villages were to be covered and served by post offices and this was again one of the greatest achievements of Rafi Ahmad for which he will always be remembered.

He paid special attention to weather bulletins issued by the meteorological department of his Ministry as he fully realised their importance for Kisans. To him these bulletins were quite useless if they did not reach Kisans. Not only these bulletins should reach them but the Kisans should also be made fully convinced of the soundness and utility of weather forecasts by experts. He, as such, got the co-operation of All India Radio for broadcasting the weather bulletins in the various languages of provinces so that these might reach all Kisans. This shows that even before assuming the charge of the Food Ministry, he was deeply interested in all matters affecting Kisans.

He firmly believed that the masses or common men were sovereign in a democratic country like India and that the administration of the country should, therefore, be for their benefit and they should have no complaints. In case of complaints those should be immediately redressed. He, therefore, always took special care to see that the grievances of the public were not only immediately looked into, but redressed and the public remained in close touch with the activities of his Ministry. In order to ensure a proper and quick investigation and disposal of public complaints about postal, telegraph and telephone departments, he set up a central complaints organisation with its branches in the various postal circles. The central organisation was to thoroughly investigate complaints pertaining to corruption, favouritism in appointments and promotions, inefficiency and delays in the delivery of mails or insured or registered letters or money orders and V.P.P.s. There were

numerous cases of prompt action taken against negligent postal employees by higher authorities or against those postal employees who by their action had caused inconvenience to the people. A simple letter was quite sufficient to move the entire postal department and not only full attention was paid to the complaint but prompt action taken during those days. On account of the keen interest which he always took in such matters, there was a marked improvement in the working of the postal, telegraph and telephone departments.

He will always be remembered for introducing the 'Inland Letter' for the benefit of the common men, as it was a good and cheap substitute for the envelope.

In order to see for himself the actual working of post offices and telegraph offices, he often went incognito to various post offices and telegraph offices to purchase some postal stationery or to get some letter registered or remit some money order or to send some telegram. He could thus see for himself how the postal staff in the posts and telegraph office behaved with the people and whether they were courteous to the people or not. After such visits he not only suggested improvement but also saw to it that the suggested improvement was actually implemented.

He paid special attention to the welfare of the employees of the Posts and Telegraphs Department who had all along been discharging their duties and were serving the people and thus working to achieve the great objectives for which he stood. The first step which he took towards the welfare of postal employees was the introduction of Sunday as holiday. In matters of holidays postmen were worse than factory and mill workers as they did not get a complete holiday. Rafi Ahmad felt that this was a great injustice for which these

employees had suffered so long. As soon as he announced this proposal about Sunday holiday he had to face severe criticism and stiff opposition from a number of quarters, like newspapermen, businessmen, lawyers and others because it meant no mail delivery on Sundays. Even the common man did not like this measure, but despite this strong and stiff opposition Rafi Ahmad could not deny the basic right of one day's rest after six days of hard work to postal employees and stood quite firm. Postmen all over the country still remember him for this great relief which he gave them and they consider him as their great benefactor. This holiday was a personal gift of Rafi Ahmad to postmen and was one of the many examples of his abiding love for the deprived and the down-trodden.

For the benefit of postal employees, he took another step of establishing a welfare department under a director to supervise and direct all the welfare activities. A number of co-operative societies covering multi-purpose activities were started at many places and Rafi Ahmad generously helped these societies in the form of subsidy and also provided for free accommodation, furniture and light. These societies procured foodgrains and cloth at wholesale prices and distributed these among their members. They ran canteens and started night classes, recreation clubs, subsidised medical dispensaries and maternity homes. A number of night schools for the lower grade staff were also started under their auspices and only a nominal fee was charged from them. Consumers' societies were also formed at a number of places. At the canteen run by the co-operative society at Posts & Telegraph Office in Eastern Court, which was opened by Rafi Ahmad, full meals were supplied at very cheap rates. Because of all these welfare and beneficial measures, he endeared himself to all the employees.

of his Ministry. When he resigned in 1951, Mr. K. Prasad, the then Director-General of Posts & Telegraphs paid glowing tributes to his great and solid achievements in these words :

“These four years, during which you had been at the helm of affairs, will be a landmark in the history of the Posts & Telegraphs Department. The difficulties arising out of the war and its aftermath have already been cleared and on the Postal side the department possesses a service of which we need not be ashamed of as compared to the postal services of the most advanced countries. The ‘Inland all-up Scheme’ is the first of its kind in the world. The foundation of the telephone service has been laid by the foundation of the Indian Telephone Industries. Then there is the ‘your own telephone scheme’ which is another product of your ingenuity.”

He resigned from the Union Cabinet in the last week of July 1951, over his ideological differences with P. D. Tandon, the then Congress President and over rampant corruption, personal rivalries and moral degradation which he felt had set in the Congress Organisation.

His resignation cast a gloom in the Ministry in particular and all its employees were overwhelmed with grief over his resignation and when he handed over charge, many actually wept. His first act after resignation was to advise employees of Posts & Telegraphs Department not to go on strike as the country was passing through a crisis, both external and internal and strike at this juncture would be just a selfish move to secure better living conditions only for themselves than that of the rest of their countrymen. The public would never tolerate it, he told.

As a member of the Union Cabinet, he was known for his great sympathy for the poor and the downtrodden and he carried ceaselessly and zealously a crusade against communalism, reaction, corruption and social injustice. He did not believe in the rigidity of rules. Rules or procedure did not worry him and he changed them to suit public convenience. He was almost unconventional in tackling administrative problems and never allowed bureaucracy to overwhelm him. However, he trusted his juniors and gave them opportunity to work and he was loved and respected by all his subordinates who regarded him as their guide and benefactor. Only a few ministers had the privilege to enjoy such love and affection of their juniors.

XIV

Resignation from Congress

BESIDES HOLDING THE most important portfolio of Home in U.P. in 1946, followed by his induction into the Central Cabinet and carrying on far-reaching and revolutionary measures for the benefit of the common man, Rafi Ahmad continued to take keen interest in the policy decisions for the country. He was a member of the Congress Working Committee and was nominated to it by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1946.

He could not tolerate the rampant corruption, nepotism and job scandals which were polluting both the Congress Governments and the organisation. He received numerous reports about corruption from different parts of the country against a number of ministers and some prominent Congressmen and he carried on a crusade against these corrupt public men. He strongly felt that such persons should have no place in the Congress Governments or in the Congress organisation. He had an intense dislike for the rotten, rustic and out of date heartless bureaucratic administrative machinery which had been a source of strength to the alien imperialist Government and which had loyally served it till its last days. As a true leftist and radical he stood for socialism and was deadly

opposed to reactionary policies and for the maintenance of status quo. He was all out for the adoption of socialist and radical policies by the Congress Governments. He was not only very anxious that the attainment of socialism and the establishment of an egalitarian social order or a socialist society should be the goal of the Congress but he was also equally anxious that immediate steps should be taken for the adoption of socialist measures as only then secular democracy could have a stable foundation in the country. To him, political democracy was meaningless without economic equality.

He very strongly felt that for the success of democracy in India, a strong opposition party was essential. So when the Congress socialists left the Congress in February 1948, he wholeheartedly welcomed the formation of the Socialist Party as an opposition group. He strongly believed that a democratic government could function effectively and successfully only if there was a strong opposition party which could always point out the shortcomings of its policies, its failures and keep it informed about the real public opinion and also of the public criticism. If there would be a strong opposition party, the Congress, for fear of being ousted from power, would have to pay attention to the grievances of the people and their redressal. He expected that the Socialist Party would act as the main broad-based opposition and thus provide a strong check on the Congress Government. This party, however, did not fulfil his expectations. He predicted that the exit of Socialists from the Congress would lead to further deterioration in the organisation and it would become more conservative and the remedy lay in thoroughly overhauling it.

He carried on intensely and consistently a crusade against the growing corruption, moral degradation and reaction in the

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Congress. He thoroughly exposed Shanmukham Chetty, the first Finance Minister, who acted as the Trojan horse of big businessmen and was mainly instrumental for his exit.

To Rafi Ahmad the re-orientation or revitalization of the Congress could be done only by bringing in it new blood and by purging it of the undesirable and corrupt elements. He did not join the Socialist Party because of his loyalty to Nehru and due to his life long association with the Congress and also because of inconsistencies and contradictions which he found among leaders of this party over various important political and economic issues. Moreover, he still had not lost hope of the reformation or revitalization of the Congress. He was hopeful that Nehru was quite capable of setting the Congress house in order.

P. D. Tandon, a senior Congress leader of U.P., who was diametrically opposed to Nehru's ideology and policies was elected as the President of the Congress in 1950 with the full support of Sardar Patel. He defeated Acharya Kripalani, whose candidature had been sponsored by Rafi Ahmad. After the election, Kripalani came out with the serious charges of malpractices and the use of official machinery for securing votes against him in the election. Rafi Ahmad's exclusion from the newly formed Congress Working Committee was not liked by Nehru, who had backed Kripalani and he could join the Congress Working Committee after great reluctance. The two general secretaries appointed by Tandon were also not liked by Nehru, Rafi Ahmad and his supporters.

All this was dismaying to Rafi Ahmad as it was a clear victory of the right reaction elements over the left. But the defeat did not in any way dishearten him and he alongwith

Kripalani formed a Congress democratic front within the Congress to fight the forces of right reaction and work for the adoption of socialists and progressive policies by the Congress. It aimed at the revitalisation of the Congress for enforcing of new standards in order to remove discontent and dissatisfaction in the rank and file of the party which was the result of ideological differences and clash of prominent personalities. One of the main aims of the front was that only Congressmen with clean record of public service should get the Congress ticket in the forthcoming general elections of 1952. The Congress President felt that the formation of this front would lead to disruption and division in the Congress and thus weaken it, but both Rafi Ahmad and Kripalani, the conveners of the Front, having support of a number of veteran Congress leaders and workers from different parts of the country, did not agree with the views of the Congress President. They were strongly of the view that as there was no strong opposition party to oppose the Congress, there was the greater need for such a group inside the party so that it might act as a watchdog and set up a standard of healthy rivalry in national service. But both Nehru and Maulana Azad felt that the dissolution of the Front was essential for the prevention of disruption and the fissiparous tendencies and Rafi Ahmad and Kripalani on the other hand pointed out that the dissolution of the front would lead to groups of Congressmen and individuals leaving the party. After prolonged discussions with Nehru and Maulana Azad, the two leaders finally decided to dissolve the front so as to create a better cordial atmosphere for unity in the Congress. But the dissolution of the front did not in any way bring about unity for the group headed by the president was not enthusiastic about it and was not prepared to have the representatives of the front in the Congress Working Committee. Rafi Ahmad found himself in a very

embarrassing position. Therefore in his letter to Nehru over the issue of the future course of action for the other members of the Front, he made it quite clear that the dissolution of the Front did not mean that the members of the Front agreed with the policy of the Congress Working Committee.

Earlier in U.P. many trusted and veteran Congressmen with very clear and long record of national service, who owed allegiance to Rafi Ahmad, were squeezed out of the U.P. Congress and no heed was paid to their genuine complaints about the widely rampant corruption both in U.P. Congress organisation and the U.P. Ministry. Same was the case with the Chief Minister. They charged him that he had completely identified himself with the majority group. After becoming desperate of getting any remedy from the High Command this group, led by Congress stalwarts like S. K. D. Paliwal, Triloki Singh, Gopal Narain Saxena and other lieutenants of Rafi Ahmad left the Congress and formed the Jan Congress in June 1950. The number of these Congressmen was quite considerable and it weakened the Congress. Kripalani finally decided to sever all his connections with the Congress and joined the Jan Congress which later on came to be known as the All-India Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party. A number of prominent Congress leaders like T. Prakasam, K. Kellapan, K.A. Damodaran Menon and workers from all over the country enthusiastically joined it and Kripalani was elected as its president.

An All-India Political Convention called by these dissident Congressmen met at Patna in June 1951 and a new all-India party, christened as the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, was formed. Rafi Ahmad attended the convention and was nominated as a member of the central council of the new party alongwith T. Prakasam, Dr. Ghosh and Kellapan and other

veteran Congress stalwarts. Therefore, he was asked by the President of U.P. Congress to explain his position arising out of his joining the central council of the new party but he did not reply to it. His talks with Pandit Pant to bring about unity between the rival groups of U.P. Congress proved to be of no avail. He did not lose hope and expected positive results from the A.I.C.C. Session which was going to be held at Bangalore to discuss the question of reforming the Congress and also to bring about unity among its various groups. But this session did not fulfil all his expectations. It passed a vague resolution through which it affirmed that the Congress was for all those who subscribed to its ideals and appealed to those who had left it to come back to its fold. While it disapproved of the formation of the groups within the Congress, it declared that whenever any charge of irregularity in the working of the organisation was made, that should be investigated in an impartial manner. However, Tandon, the Congress President, refused to reconstitute the Congress Working Committee, the overwhelming majority of which was dominated by his men, and to make it more broad-based and representative. So nothing positive came out of this session. Rafi Ahmad fully endorsed Nehru's report to A.I.C.C., in which he presented the various problems confronting the country in a realistic manner and also presented a programme of action, which if executed, was bound to improve and ameliorate the condition of the poor and enthuse the youth for national service. But at the same time he strongly felt that the Prime Minister's programme could be implemented only when men of integrity having complete faith in this programme fully geared up and utilised the administrative machinery and succeeded in involving the people in it. This could be possible only when both the Central Cabinet and the Congress Working Committee had on it such persons who were convinced of the soundness of this programme and who

had implicit faith in it and were men of proven integrity. According to him, the A.I.C.C. resolution had made it abundantly clear that the Central Government would have to follow Nehru's policies and function in accordance with these but it suffered from the great defect that it still left the Congress organisation under the control of bosses who were diametrically opposed to Nehru's progressive policies and were opposed to him and who controlled its party machinery both at the Centre as well as in the States. Rafi Ahmad did not want to weaken the Congress but at the same time he could not tolerate that the Congress should pursue rightist or reactionary policies or should hobnob in any way or should have any truck with the capitalists. In the past he had inspired a number of revolts inside the Congress and used the splinter or rebel groups as levers to set right path. Now when he found that the Congress bosses were not prepared to come to terms with the dissident Congressmen and no heed was paid to the redressal of their genuine grievances against corrupt elements in the party by the Congress High Command, he decided to resign from the Congress. He took this decision with a heavy heart. Ajit Prasad Jain, the then Union Rehabilitation Minister and Bal Krishan Sharma, a prominent U.P. Congress Leader—his two principal aides and close friends—followed him. In his letter of resignation from the Union Cabinet, Rafi Ahmad said that he was resigning not because he had any differences with the Prime Minister but was resigning because the Congress dominated the Government. Nehru did not accept his and Jain's resignations and asked both of them to continue, which they did. In the course of a joint statement with Jain, he pointed out that the ideology of the President of the Congress and Nehru were diametrically opposed to each other and there was nothing in common between the two and it was rather strange and un-understandable. The Congress President strongly

objected to the continuance of Rafi Ahmad and A. P. Jain in the Union Cabinet on constitutional grounds i.e. of remaining in the Cabinet and opposing the Congress. Earlier the same Cabinet had several non-Congressmen like Shanmukham Chetty, who on the eve of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 had deserted the Congress and had not resigned from the Central Assembly; had signed the notorious Ottawa Pact and as a reward for his "great" services had got knighthood from the British Government. Besides, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee also continued to be in the Cabinet though he was the President of the arch Hindu communalist organization, the Hindu Mahasabha which was deadly opposed to the Congress ideology. But Rafi Ahmad fully realizing the embarrassing position of Nehru and also because of the mounting pressure of his followers convinced Pandit Nehru to accept his resignation from the Cabinet which he did. Same was the case with Mr. Jain. On 2 August 1951, Rafi Ahmad handed over his charge. There was wide gloom over his resignation and it was considered as a terrible loss to the country. In a press statement, he explained the reasons of his resignation. The main reasons were the moral degradation which had set in the Congress and the widely prevalent corruption which had polluted both the organization and the Governments; the group and personal rivalries which even went out of the way to protect individuals from the consequence of their corrupt and other misdeeds. He was full of praise for Nehru who represented the urges and aspirations of the Indian masses. He had full faith in him but he regretted that, unfortunately, when the policies which he had enunciated and for which he had worked so enthusiastically were implemented, the results happened to be quite different from what were expected. It was the main function of the Congress to help in the implementation of policies of its Governments both at the Centre as well as in the States, but it

was really distressing that it had miserably failed in the function of this all important duty. He regretted that Congressmen like him who wanted to help Nehru in the implementation of his very sound and correct policies, found themselves quite helpless and they were not only not allowed to do so but very many of them were under some pretext or the other expelled from the organisation. He announced that having failed in all his attempts to achieve his objectives, he alongwith a number of his friends and colleagues had decided to resign from the Congress and form a new party which would have a socialist programme and which would be a viable alternative to the Congress. He forthwith declared that he had resigned from the Congress to register his protest against deviation of the party from its aims and objectives.

This split in the Congress Party was fully exploited by those very forces he was trying to check. They started sending agent provocateurs to leaders of both the Congress and K.M.P.P. and widened the gulf. An all-India calculated campaign of sending congratulatory telegrams was also organised. Rafi Ahmad saw through this game and though he had given his blessings to the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, he did not join it. He preferred to remain independent. He, thus, safeguarded vital interests against any one, nefariously exploiting the situation for his own ends.

Nehru was sad over all these developments. He finally decided to resign from the Congress Working Committee and the Central Congress Parliamentary Board. He thus gave a shock treatment to the Congress which according to him, had been, unfortunately, isolated from the people and was drifting in the wrong direction. This was followed by Maulana Azad's resignation from the two bodies of the Congress. A session of

the A.I.C.C. was held which accepted the resignation of Mr. Tandon and members of his working committee and elected Nehru as the new Congress President. Thus at last after a long struggle Rafi Ahmad's old strategy of making Nehru the over all leader of the Congress succeeded. Nehru passionately appealed to all those Congressmen who had left the party to rejoin it.

Although Rafi Ahmad did not approve of the personnel of the working committee formed by Nehru, he welcomed Nehru's assertion that there should be men of integrity to run the Congress organisation. He regretted that Nehru's unity appeal lacked concrete proposals. He announced on 4 October 1951, his decision of returning to the Congress fold to strengthen Nehru's hands. He expressed his satisfaction that Nehru had realised the correctness of his and other Congressmen's charges, changed the Congress Working Committee and had also accepted his demand that only those would be selected as Congress candidates in the forthcoming election who were noted for their honesty and integrity. He felt that the K.M.P.P. in whose formation he had played a very vital part, was fully justified in considering his decision to rejoin the Congress as 'desertion' as this decision of his would adversely affect its future. A number of his lieutenants and followers, prominent among whom were, Ajit Prasad Jain, Bal Krishan Sharma, K. D. Malaviya, Jogendra Singh, J.P. Rawat and Govind Sahai, returned to the Congress fold, while a good many among whom were S.K.D. Paliwal, Triloki Singh and Gopal Narain Saxena, stayed in the K.M.P.P.

Rafi Ahmad expected that only such Congressmen would be selected as Congress candidates in the forthcoming general elections, who had a clean record in public life and it was due to his efforts that a screening committee under the chairman-

ship of Sri Prakash, his old and close friend and a top Congress leader, was set up to do the screening of Congress candidates. Rafi Ahmad with the help of his other team-mates worked hard and produced before the committee complete material supported by documentary proof about the dubiousness, misdeeds and corrupt practices in the case of a number of Congressmen, who were seeking Congress tickets for legislatures. The material produced before the committee included names of many ministers and some of the prominent Congress leaders and he strongly hoped that such persons would not be nominated as Congress candidates and this would go to improve the image of the party. But his hopes were belied and despite this screening a good number of Congressmen with tarnished image and record succeeded in getting the party ticket while the claims of a number of partymen owing allegiance to him were discarded, despite the fact that they were men of integrity and had clean record of public service. Manipulations by persons who had come closer to Nehru proved to be stronger and they succeeded in sabotaging the efforts of Rafi Ahmad and of the screening committee and thus he could not have his views accepted. However, he voiced the popular feeling that their standing or public position was due only to Nehru's support to them and in larger national interest Nehru should refrain from giving his support to them. But Nehru's magnanimity towards his old and some life-long comrades prevented him from taking any drastic action. This was not to the liking of Rafi Ahmad as he could not achieve his objective of purging the Congress of undesirable elements. He was so much disturbed that he did not participate in the Congress election campaign. As usual, he did not visit his constituency, Bahraich at all from which he was to contest for Lok Sabha. He further became unhappy when in the elections there was a practical rout of K.M.P.P. candidates and of the

other opposition parties. This, according to him, was not good for democracy for its success largely depends on the presence of a strong opposition party.

The Congress had a landslide victory in 1952 elections and Rafi Ahmad was also returned to the Lok Sabha with a thumping majority. But his strategy had not fully succeeded. Undoubtedly Nehru had become the master of the Congress but the Congress could not be purged of undesirable elements. Rafi Ahmad himself suffered a serious set back when a number of his friends and followers stayed back in K.M.P.P., while a good number of them could find a place neither in U. P. assembly nor in the Lok Sabha. Despite this set back, he was very much satisfied that Nehru's leadership had been accepted by all and the landslide victory of the Congress in the election had again shown the massive popularity which Nehru enjoyed among the masses. The other redeeming feature of general election being the crushing defeat of Hindu chauvinism i.e. the newly formed Jan Sangh and other rightist parties. The Congress victory was the victory of socialism and secularism over the forces of communalism, reaction and vested interests. Had Rafi Ahmad not carried on the ceaseless crusade against corruption and moral degradation which had gripped both the Congress organisation and the Government, had he not formed the Congress Democratic Front, had he not played an important part in the formation of the K.M.P.P. and had he not resigned from the Cabinet and from the Congress, Nehru also would not have resigned from the Congress Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. and would not have become master of the Congress, and had Nehru not been the Congress president on the eve of the first general election, the Congress would not have swept the polls and returned to power at the Centre and in most of the States. It was only because of Nehru's

immense popularity that the Congress swept the polls in 1952. Credit for making Nehru the master of the Congress party and the spectacular success of the Congress in 1952 election and later the adoption of socialist policies by the Congress must go to Rafi Ahmad. And decidedly this was again one of his most remarkable achievements.

As Union Food Minister

BEFORE THE FORMATION of the Union Cabinet in May 1952, there were all sorts of speculations about the portfolio to be given to Rafi Ahmad. Some thought that he would be given the Railways while others speculated some other key portfolio for him. Some speculated over the food portfolio which was the most difficult assignment. This portfolio had proved the graveyard of those who had held it as they had all proved failures. Before the general election, the country had been facing the worst food situation which had further deteriorated. The target of self-sufficiency in food had miserably failed and there was a cut in rations by one third (from 12 ounces to 9 ounces) on account of acute shortage of foodgrains. Besides there was an acute scarcity of fodder and of drinking water in different parts of the country. The subsidy given by the Government on the imported foodgrains being totally stopped leading to popular discontent and the big cut in ration, there was country-wide protest demonstrations against it. The year 1951 had begun with a glooming portent. Stocks of foodgrains with the States were very low and the Kharif crops of 1950-51 had been severely damaged by floods and there had been a long spell of drought from Saurashtra to the south Punjab. The failure of rains for the fifth year in succession in Madras and Andhra especially in Rayalseema region had led to near

famine conditions. But this was not the case with Rayalseema region alone. Actually on account of drought and failure of rains in different parts of the country, near famine conditions prevailed all over the land. There had been a rise in the international price of foodgrains and this had led to an increase in the prices of the imported foodgrains. Thus the food situation was alarming and quite challenging. Such were the conditions when Rafi Ahmad was given this most difficult portfolio. Nehru was very much reluctant to give it to him who had been a target of constant attacks on account of his political activities from a section of the Congressmen, his political adversaries, and he did not want to embarrass in any way his very trusted and close colleague. According to one story some of the MPs had suggested to Nehru, who was extremely worried over the ever deteriorating and worsening food situation of the country, that Rafi Ahmad was the ideal choice and he alone could successfully solve the food problem. Before assuming the charge of this most difficult ministry, he had thoroughly studied the food situation by visiting all *mandis* of foodgrains and visiting different parts of the country. Thus he had arrived at the correct conclusion that the food situation was not so bad or hopeless as it appeared. The problem of sugar supply was solved much to the relief of the people. This was possible because of the increased production of sugar which had exceeded all previous production marks. People could buy all their requirements of sugar from Government ration shops or fair price shops at controlled rates. The main reason behind this decision was that he did not like that people should wait in long queues for hours to get their fixed quota of sugar. Moreover, the rationing very much encouraged black-marketing for when people did not get all their basic requirements at ration shops, they approached black marketeers who supplied sugar to them as much as they needed at enhanced prices. Not only this, he also took

another revolutionary, rather marvellous step of exporting sugar. This was something undreamt of. He was very keen that India should compete with world market sugar prices.

He strongly favoured decontrol for it was based on the need of minimizing obligations and for providing greater freedom to agriculturists. He was firmly of the view that neither shortages were alarming nor were the controls the only remedy for them. He undertook an extensive country-wide tour to see for himself the actual food position and he made an inspection of the district supply offices, offices of the Director of State Civil supplies, the Government godowns where stocks of foodgrains were kept and made thorough and searching enquiries about both of the quality and quantity of stocks and this thorough survey helped him to form an idea of the actual stock position, irrespective of what a particular State Government or a State Director or Controller of Civil Supplies said to get as much as he could from the Centre. He found huge quantities of foodgrains lying un-accounted, and unprotected against the sun or the rain with the result that a considerable percentage of it had become thoroughly rotten or had become damaged, causing loss worth lakhs of rupees by the sheer carelessness or absence of supervision. Yet the State Governments always wanted extra allotment from the Centre although huge stocks with them remained unused. This to him was nothing but a colossal waste. Madras (now Tamil Nadu) was the first State to give up controls and introduce decontrol with the full approval of Rafi Ahmad as the public opinion there was also strongly in favour of decontrol. The success of Madras experiment had a good effect on other States as well and Orissa, Mysore, Rajasthan and Bombay also removed restrictions on the inter-district movement of foodgrains.

He had long administrative duels and debates with both the protagonists of controls and planners to whom decontrol

was nothing but a policy of disaster and of general confusion. Rafi Ahmad held the view that food control covered only a small portion of the country, that is, one-third of the population of the country and the remaining two-thirds had neither liked it nor had the planners ever thought of extending it. He argued that there was no justification in considering only the minority of the population i.e. 90 millions which had been covered by controls not amalgamating it with the large majority of the Indian population. The advisory Board of Planning Commission which was a great exponent of planning advanced this argument against decontrol that planned economy without controls was quite illogical. To this he replied that the Board should have come forward with a scheme of rationing which should have covered the entire population of the country and it should have advocated a policy of total procurement of foodgrains. He felt that no sanctity could be attached to particular forms of control for purposes of planning in a democracy so long as these aspects were not defeated. The objects of planning could be achieved by restricting rationing only to larger cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Madras etc. and by forming zones for the free movement of foodgrains. He favoured decontrol because it was based on the need for minimizing obligations for providing greater freedom for agriculturists consistently with the responsibilities of providing food in deficit areas. He did not rely on official production figures as officers always under estimated production because they felt that if they reported good production, they would be asked to procure a larger quantity. In support of his argument he quoted figures for the years 1950-51, and 1951-52 in which production had been under estimated. During the debate on control versus decontrol, the Union Finance Minister challenged him on the basis of figures and statistics of the Union Ministry of Food and Agriculture in order to prove that it was dangerous to carry

out the experiment of decontrol, but Rafi Ahmad did not accept the correctness of figures of his own ministry. In the course of the debate in the Parliament on decontrol, a number of fiery speeches were made against decontrol. Rafi Ahmad convinced all the members and by his weighty and sound arguments he silenced all his opponents of decontrol. His main argument against controls was that when controls did not serve the interests of consumer or the common man and led only to enhance the price instead of reducing it, there was no justification whatsoever for its continuance. But at the same time he made it quite clear that he was a firm believer in controlled economy as he believed in socialism but the kind of controls which India had during all these years had not, in any way, helped the people. According to him controls became necessary when prices were high and beyond the reach of common man as in 1947 when the procurement price of wheat was Rs. 13.00 per maund while its open market price was just the double i.e. Rs. 26.00. The Government was quite justified in intervening in such a situation in the interests of the consumer and procuring wheat and other foodgrains and opening shops where the people could buy commodities at reasonable prices but now in 1952 conditions were quite different. There had been two good bumper crops and the two million wheat loan had very much helped the Government in breaking the ring of food hoarding, profiteering and even black marketting and it was possible to give up a central reserve.

Rafi Ahmad's speeches did wonders by creating a psychological atmosphere of plenty which greatly helped in the process of dehoarding and now hoarded commodities began to reach markets. His objectives of decontrols acted as an incentive to further production because when Kisans knew that they could sell what they produced in the open market without any

restrictions, they produced more. His speeches were also responsible for bringing down the prices of agricultural commodities and this led to a fall in black market prices which now became lower than the controlled prices. On this account people found it more profitable to purchase in the black market rather than to purchase it at controlled prices and this led to a steep fall in the purchase from ration shops. Being encouraged by all these favourable circumstances, Rafi Ahmad decided in favour of decontrol. A number of top most economic experts and bureaucrats doubted the wisdom of this decision and predicted that the benefits of decontrol would be short lived and this decision would have to be reversed. The controversy, however, soon died down as the results demonstrated the wisdom of the bold decision. It compelled the speculators and hoarders to release the hoarded stocks which, in turn, brought down the price level. Rafi Ahmad felt that decontrol would not only lessen the sufferings and the hardships of the people but the huge amounts spent on the enforcement and maintenance of controls could be spent on other beneficial projects. At the same time he kept the permanent machinery intact so that the whole thing might not pass into the hands of the food-grain dealers and people might not suffer on that account. He kept a strict check and vigilance on them so that prices could not rise. The grain dealers were required to get themselves registered and keep a full account of stocks purchased and sold. In case of any rise in prices, the Government were to requisition the stock from private dealers at procurement prices plus a small margin of commission and distribute the commodities through the fair price shops. There were various devices which he had adopted in order to prevent any rise in prices and help the people. He was firmly of the view that if the Government were watchful, it could control effectively without causing much cost to consumers.

Many States adopted decontrol and Rafi Ahmad told the press representatives that if they found control in any State, it was solely due to the Government that state had not enough stocks to feed its people.

He kept a strict vigilance on the working of his decontrol policy. As soon as he received any report of deficit or shortage of foodgrains in any part of the country, he at once rushed to the spot and undertook immediate steps for solving the problem. He found that in some districts of Bengal, a number of persons could not purchase foodgrains on account of unemployment and he suggested to the Bengal Government to provide work to 10 percent of them and then this problem would be solved. During his tour of Rayalseema region, he found that the main problem was shortage of water both for drinking as well as for irrigational purpose. He tried to find out a permanent solution to remove the chronic shortages and consequent frequent famines in the region. He took up this matter with the Planning Commission to prepare a plan to solve the problem.

He adopted numerous measures to increase food production. For instance, special efforts were made to supply fertilizers and imported seeds to cultivators and the price of ammonium sulphate, an important fertilizer, was reduced to enable Kisans to use it on their fields. He succeeded in getting Rupees eight crores for the supply of fertilizers. He knew well that big irrigation projects which were essential for increasing production would take considerable time to complete. So, for the present, he laid stress on minor irrigation works. He undertook several measures to induce and assist small farmers to increase production by the use of better quality of seeds and manures by providing them with irrigation facilities, by sinking

wells and cleaning up tanks and canals and by the introduction of agrarian reforms which were to create a sustained interest of Kisans in the land they cultivated.

He keenly felt the need and necessity of the study of agriculture and he also felt that practical training should be an essential part of it. He was very keen that Kisans who were quite ignorant of scientific methods, should adopt it because only through these methods their yields could increase. This was not enough that more area of land was cultivated. Equally important was that the yield per acre should increase so that agriculture could become remunerative and food production should also increase. He was so much impressed by the Japanese method of paddy cultivation that at his instance special measures were undertaken to propagate and popularise it among Kisans. Other measures to help and increase production adopted were the reclamation of fallow lands (The Central Tractors Organization reclaimed lakhs of acres of land in U.P., M.P., Madras, Saurashtra and Bihar) and sinking of tubewells. All these measure show how much keenly interested he was in increasing production and in making agriculture remunerative.

He was of the view that old methods of irrigation should continue side by side the new methods as these would also help in achieving the objects of self-sufficiency in food production.

The partition of the country had adversely affected the amount of cotton production, as considerable portion of cotton producing lands had gone over to Pakistan. Rafi Ahmad took special measures like the extension of irrigational facilities to these lands, giving interest-free loans to cotton growing States for the purchase of improved varieties of cotton seeds and ammonium sulphate and grant of subsidy to cotton seeds.

Similarly, to give impetus to the increased production of Jute which was in ever growing demand, he ordered a number of measures such as the distribution of fertilizers, construction of tanks, establishment of seed multiplication farms, demonstrations of line sowing to cultivators, propaganda for extending Jute cultivation to fallow lands and for planting fast growing crop of Jute.

He worked vigorously for achieving complete self-sufficiency in food and for the total removal of control. He found no justification in keeping controls in places which were surplus from the point of view of foodgrains.

Since he took over as the Union Food Minister, he made drastic cuts in imports as he did not like that the precious foreign exchange which could have brought various items of machinery of vital importance for the industrialisation of the country should be spent on imports of foodgrains. From 48 million tones of foodgrains ordered in 1952 he had brought it down to a mere ship-load of wheat in 1954 as there was no shortage of foodgrains in the country. This was one of the miraculous achievements of Rafi Ahmad.

The year 1954 was the most remarkable in the history of Indian food position as it was in this year that the progressive relaxation of controls, introduced in 1952, finally led to the restoration of free markets. This was undoubtedly a great miracle. Nobody could ever imagine that a country which was on the verge of famine would be converted so soon into a country of plenty, would achieve complete self-sufficiency in food and would practically have no or very little of imports and would export rice and sugar. But all this happened solely on account of Rafi Ahmad's masterly handling of the situation and, decidedly, it was a great miracle to the surprise of all.

Procurement of foodgrains and statutory rationing were completely given up and there was no restriction on what the cultivators and dealers sold or consumers purchased. The production of cereals exceeded the targets fixed in First Five Year Plan by 3.6 million tons. This increase was not only due to the increase in average area but in the increase in yield per acre due to increased irrigational facilities and the greater use of fertilizers. There was an increase by 75 per cent as compared to the production of 1952. Similarly, production of pulses and oil seeds also exceeded targets and there was a steep fall in the prices of wheat, bajra, maize and other agricultural commodities. The Government had to resort to corrective action to protect the interest of the cultivator. Rafi Ahmad was, however, very careful that this allround and overall comfortable and satisfactory food position did not, in any way, lead to any sort of complacency. He took steps to build up reserves to meet any emergency.

He announced the export of rice (as its production had increased by 10 per cent) to Sri Lanka, Great Britain, Canada and China. Sugar production also increased by 30 per cent. Thus an era of plenty for which Rafi Ahmad had been working so enthusiastically had ushered in. Now every thing—wheat, rice, sugar, millet, maize—was available in abundance and at cheaper rates.

Rafi Ahmad thus converted a deficit country into a surplus one. According to this very correct description in a Government of India notification “his unswerving faith in the essential soundness of the food position of the country enabled him to confound sceptics. He successfully accomplished his policy of removing all irksome controls in food and his boldness helped the country to turn a situation of scarcity into one of self sufficiency.”

As a Minister for Food he left a memorable impact in the annals of the Indian History. The Ministry of Food seemed unmanageable to many big wigs but Rafi Ahmad breathed a new air of change in it. His very bold and imaginative measures like decontrol earned him the approbation of his countrymen harried by controls and the resultant artificial scarcity and trade malpractices. He became a household name all over the country to the dismay and despair of his detractors.

People now got their food stuff in sufficient quantities at cheaper rates and rationing and controls were given a decent burial. All this he achieved within a surprisingly short time. One reason of this miraculous achievement was his prompt and immediate action. In no time he managed to rush railway wagons to scarcity areas and this timely action prevented rise in prices. Once he received an information through his sources that Calcutta was about to face the worst food crisis as there was no wheat in Government godowns. He at once flew to Calcutta and announced reduction in the official price of wheat through All India Radio and got railway wagons full of wheat rushed to Calcutta. This not only solved the immediate crisis but also brought down the price of wheat. Because of such measures he became the most popular Minister and was acclaimed as a miracle man.

Role in Nepal and Kashmir Affairs

IN 1950, THE Nepal Congress organised a revolt against the autocratic, despotic and thoroughly ineffective Government of the Ranas or Ranarchy in Nepal and it used Indian territories as its base. Mahabir Shamsheer Rana and Subarna Shamsheer Rana, its leaders, lived in exile in Calcutta. The revolt aimed at the establishment of a democratic Government. King Tribhuvan who was out of favour with the Ranas, fled the country and Indian rightists fully supported the Rana regime in Nepal. The Government of India declared non-intervention towards the popular anti-Rana revolt. The Central Border Police was instructed by the Home Ministry to prevent the infiltration of men and arms across the Indo-Nepal border. Rafi Ahmad fully sympathised with the Nepalese rebels who were fighting for democracy. He was opposed to this view that the Government of India should lend in any way its support to the reactionary and despotic Rana Government. He, therefore, took the bold and revolutionary step of carrying on a private war of intervention against the Ranarchy by smuggling arms through an aircraft of the Himalayan Airways, owned by one of the exiled Ranas, into Nepal which were used by the Nepal rebels to fight the Nepali

army. Leaflets, on behalf of the Nepal Congress, condemning the Rana Government were dropped from it. In his confidential report Mullik, the then Chief of the Indian Intelligence Bureau, informed Sardar Patel that there was a general impression in Raxaul and in the neighbourhood that the attack of the Nepalese rebels had the backing of the Government of India and the Raxaul newspapers had also given the same impression. Sardar Patel grew alarmed over these happenings. The Nepalese ambassador and Ranas Kaiser Shamsheer Jung and Bijai Shamsheer Jung, the spokesmen of Ranarchy, who had come from Nepal, met Sardar Patel who supported the Ranas as he felt convinced that as they alone could give a stable government in Nepal, they should not be discarded. He pleaded for a controlled democracy for Nepal in which the Ranas should be included and in which the king should play a formative role and a rapprochement should be arranged between the king and the Ranas. Nehru, on the other hand, held the view that the Government of India could not support Ranarchy which had been badly shaken and also because of the fact that the Indian public opinion was overwhelmingly in favour of the Nepal Congress. He strongly felt that far-reaching political and constitutional reforms were essential and inevitable and the need of the hour was that the Nepal Congress should be at the helm of affairs. He threw his moral weight on the side of radical changes and far-reaching reforms or for a democratic set-up for which the Nepal Congress stood. He made it quite clear that nothing short of it would satisfy the Nepalese people. In the absence of a democratic government, there would be insecurity and instability which would not be good. Thus Nehru fully supported the Nepalese rebels. Rafi Ahmad fought this attempt of the Indian rightists to deprive the people of Nepal of the fruits of their victory by belittling the revolution and saying that the Ranas in exile who had led and organised the revolt, and the other rebel leaders, were no

different from the Ranas who had been in power and they had a stake in the country while the former had none and that it would be best to utilise the better elements among the Ranas alongwith such popular representative as were available in Nepal, to provide a structure for controlled democracy in which the king should play a formative role and, on that basis, a rapproachment should be arranged between the king and Ranas. They were strongly of the view that democracy would not survive in Nepal. Nehru did not agree with the rightists and upheld Rafi Ahmad's stand to the chagrin of the rightists. Rafi Ahmad's active help in the form of imported arms from Burma and of Police arms from Kashmir, smuggled into Nepal, ultimately helped the Nepalese rebels to get rid of the corrupt and reactionary rule of the Ranas.

...

Rafi Ahmad always took a keen interest in the affairs of Kashmir since the days the Kashmir National Conference, under the dynamic leadership of Sheikh Abdullah, had been carrying on a heroic struggle against the autocratic and oppressive Government of Maharaja Hari Singh. He very much admired the Sheikh and agreed with his ideology. He was among those front rank Congress leaders who alongwith Pandit Nehru had fully supported the 'Quit Kashmir Movement', launched by him in 1946.

To him Kashmir was not only an integral part of India but also the symbol of Indian secularism as the National Conference had declared at its special session, held in October 1948, that Kashmir with its unflinching faith in 'New Kashmir' could find no proper place in Pakistan with its basis on the two-nation theory'. He, therefore, was strongly of the view that Kashmir should be defended by India and he supported the view that it should enjoy a special status and any attempt to deprive Kashmir

of its special status and to allow pro-Pakistani elements on the other hand in it would be highly detrimental and fatal to Indian secularism and that obviously would be a bad day, if unfortunately, Kashmir was not allowed to go ahead with the New Kashmir Programme.

Earlier when the Union Cabinet considered the request of the Maharaja of Kashmir for military help against the Pakistani instigated and equipped tribal aggression, Rafi Ahmad enthusiastically favoured the sending of Indian troops to Kashmir to defend it. There was some doubt about the feasibility of sending Indian troops to Kashmir. Rafi Ahmad was strongly of the view that the Union Government must take the risk and save Kashmir. He was emphatically of the view that Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues should be included in Kashmir Government and then only people of Kashmir would support the Kashmir Government which would enjoy their confidence and support and would successfully fight the aggression. The later events proved how correct he was.

Immediately after the accession of Kashmir to India, he accompanied Nehru on a visit to Srinagar. At that time the situation was very critical as the invaders had not yet been completely routed and they were in the vicinity of Srinagar. Alongwith Nehru, he had a frank discussion about Kashmir with Mehar Chand Mahajan, the then Prime Minister of Kashmir who was greatly impressed by Rafi Ahmad's politeness and straightforwardness. Rafi Ahmad remained in close touch with Kashmir affairs but he always remained behind the scene.

He fully shared Sheikh Abdullah's views that the support which a powerful section of the Indian press was giving to the agitation launched by the Jan Sangh and the Praja Parishad, the intensely communal organisations of Jammu & Kashmir,

was most unfortunate as it weakened the forces of secular democracy, fanned communal passions and worsened the entire situation.

When owing to the foreign and internal intrigues, relations between the Sheikh and the Union Government began to deteriorate and there was the talk of independent Kashmir by the Sheikh followed by further estrangement of relations between him and the Government of India, Rafi Ahmad, who had full information about all happenings in Kashmir, tried his best to improve the relations and remove mutual misgivings. He flew to Srinagar several times and had talks with the Sheikh to avert the crisis and persuade him to remove misunderstandings caused by some of his public statements as reported in the press. But, unfortunately, his attempts failed and the Government of India was constrained to take the painful decision of arresting the Sheikh. After sometime, as has been pointed out by the late Mridula Sarabhai, who was very close both to Rafi Ahmad and Pt. Nehru, Rafi Ahmad had fully realised that both he and Pt. Nehru had been made victims of foul play and that a conspiracy had been hatched against the Sheikh by some selfish Kashmiri politicians. To her it was an act to undermine Nehru. Rafi Ahmad was determined to reterieve the situation and he decided to work for securing justice to Sheikh Abdullah but, unfortunately, his death intervened. According to late Sheo Prasad Sinha, a former judge of Allahabad High Court and a leading advocate of Supreme Court, it was one month before his death that Rafi Ahmad asked Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the Sheikh's successor, about the Sheikh's release. The Bakshi replied that his release meant his own exit. Rafi Ahmad's rejoinder was that it did not matter—the sooner the Sheikh was released the better and delay would create great complications.

Till his last he continued to take a keen interest in the affairs of Kashmir and in him Kashmir lost a great champion of its rights and special status. He strongly felt that it was in the interest of Indian Muslims that Kashmir remained a part of India. When Dr. Graham, the U.N. representative, visited India on Rafi Ahmad's initiative, a memorandum was signed by a number of leading Indian Muslim leaders fully supporting and justifying the decision of the Kashmir Constituent Assembly about Kashmir's accession to India and characterising it as irrevocable and strongly repudiating the Pakistan claims on Kashmir.

XVII

Death

CEASELESS STRENUOUS WORK, several chronic ailments like severe heart trouble, blood pressure, constant tours and endless swarms of daily visitors numbering several hundreds, with their numerous and intricate problems from very early hours of the morning till mid-night not only had telling effect on Rafi Ahmad's health but had also completely shattered it. For this he had to go many a time 'under ground' before his death which meant going to some unknown place for taking complete rest for several days. He went to bed completely exhausted. He had also developed cardiac asthma on which account he could sleep little. This sleeplessness also accounted for further deterioration. A few days before his death, on account of his rapidly deteriorating health, his doctors had strongly advised him to have complete rest for two months. But he dismissed this advice and called them 'alarmists' and said that he was perfectly well. But nobody expected that he would die suddenly and so soon.

He did not fear death but welcomed it. In April 1953, when he called on the ailing Shafiqur Rehman Kidwai—his cousin and a Congress leader of Delhi and saw him surrounded with all sorts of medicines, charts and an army of nurses of the hospital, he expressed his repulsion by saying that he could not

stand all that; when it would come to dying, he would die in a minute.

He returned to Delhi on the morning of 24 October 1954 after a stay of four days in Lucknow and of one day's halt in Kanpur. This was his last visit to both the cities. During his visit to Lucknow he had a very busy and crowded programme—had met large number of his colleagues and Congressmen and had called on a number of Congress leaders and ministers. Had he not died so early, these meetings and talks would have led to some far-reaching changes in U.P. politics. During his one-day stay in Kanpur he had attended the reception held in his honour by Kanpur industrialists in addition to his other hectic political activities i.e. meeting local Congressmen and political workers and calling on some of his friends. It was at this reception that he had made this statement that he would succeed Pt. Nehru as the Prime Minister if he went on a few months rest and he had also humorously remarked that people would always remember him in that capacity. After his arrival in Delhi he paid a courtesy call to the Union President, saw the usually large number of visitors and then went to his office where he disposed of some urgent files. He cracked jokes with Mr. Hathee Singh, Pt. Nehru's brother-in-law, who had called on him and told him that being an asthama patient, he was bound to live long. As arranged and agreed previously, he, accompanied by Mrs. Subhadra Joshi the then General Secretary of Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee, left at about 7 p.m. for Gandhi Grounds to address an election meeting organised by the Delhi Congress. This mammoth meeting was in connection with Delhi Corporation election in which the Congress had to face strong rivals in Jan Sangh and Praja Socialist Party. It was the last public meeting which he addressed and the first and the last public meeting addressed by him during his seven years'

stay in Delhi. His doctors examining him soon after his arrival in Delhi, considered it dangerous for him to address the public meeting as they had found both his pulse and blood pressure alarming and strongly advised him to have complete rest at least for a fortnight. But he did not accept their advice as it was very painful for him to disappoint thousands who had gathered to hear him. He could climb the high dias with difficulty and as soon as he rose to address the huge gathering which was of about one lakh, he received mass ovation with the deafening slogans of 'Kidwai Zindabad'. In his speech he pointed out that the Congress had fully identified itself with the people and it was doing its best to remove poverty and it had not only won freedom but had a number of achievements to its credit during the last seven years, each of which they had reasons to be proud of. He then put statistics and figures before the audience to prove that the country had achieved self-sufficiency in food and that it could export foodgrains and cloth, which happened to be a rationed commodity only a few years back and that it was now manufacturing telephones and cycles. He said that it would be unfair to compare India's industrial progress with Japan and Germany as they were fully developed before the Second World War. He felt convinced that only the Congress could deliver the goods but expressed his great dissatisfaction with the P.S.P. because it was greatly disarrayed and disorganized and its leaders held quite divergent and conflicting views and it was not possible to know its real policy towards various important problems facing the country. He wondered how could people vote for such parties in view of such deplorable state of affairs and how could such parties deliver goods when they could not save themselves from disintegration and when they were victims of internal bickerings. Interests of the country demanded that there should be a stable Government and this stability could be given only by the

Congress which was a strong and disciplined party. He had spoken hardly for seven minutes when he had a severe heart attack. He sat down and tried to resume his speech but he did not get relief and found it impossible to proceed with his speech. On the request of the Congress leaders and a section of the audience, he finished his speech and reasoning with the public that he would come again, left the meeting for his house accompanied by this niece and his bodyguard. While being driven to his house he was profusely perspiring and feeling much uneasiness. His bodyguard offered to press his brow, but he declined. He was escorted to his bedroom by the two and on entering there, he dropped into the bed and his sherwani and shoes were hurriedly removed. His breathing became harder and more difficult. He asked for water. Then he fell back dead.

The news of his sad and sudden death spread like wild fire and the whole country was plunged in deep gloom and sorrow. A national mourning was declared by the Government. All State functions were cancelled and flags flew at half-mast over Rashtrapati Bhawan, Parliament House, all Government offices, public buildings, embassies and all offices of the State Governments as a mark of respect to the departed leader. To express grief, there was a complete hartal throughout the country. All markets, establishments and educational institutions were closed. This news was broadcast from All India Radio and a large number of people wept bitterly on hearing this sad news. Mourners from adjacent cities and towns of U.P., Haryana and Punjab, rushed to Delhi while a number of his friends, belonging to distant places, flew to Delhi to pay homage.

There was complete mourning in Delhi. All election meetings, organised by different political parties in different parts of the city, were cancelled and, in their place, a number of joint condolence meetings were held in different localities which were addressed by leaders of all political parties and very warm and glowing tributes were paid to him. His death was described as an irreparable loss to the country. The Government of India, in a notification, paid very rich tributes to him and very aptly summed up the great and unforgettable services rendered by him in these words :

“By his passing the Government and the nation have lost a great patriot, administrator and statesman, whose outstanding abilities and brilliant achievements had won universal acclaim.

“He was amongst the first to respond to the call of Mahatma Gandhi and join in the fight for national freedom. His exceptional powers of organisation soon established for him a position among the leaders. He was arrested several times and spent over 10 years in prison—an indication of not only of the intensity of his devotion to the cause of freedom but also of the fear which he inspired among those who opposed the freedom.

“To the task of administration he brought to bear his rare and exceptional qualities of clear sightedness, realistic outlook, boldness and originality of approach, organising ability and a wide and human sympathy and understanding. His work as Minister incharge of Revenue, Home and Jails in U.P. was so successful that his appointment as the Union Minister in the first Government of free India followed as a natural course. As Union Minister for Communications he confounded sceptics and critics alike

by successfully launching a number of bold and beneficent schemes.

“His unswerving faith in the essential soundness of the food position of the country enabled him again to confound the sceptics. He successfully accomplished his policy of removing all irksome controls on food and his boldness in a sense helped the country to turn a situation of scarcity into one of sufficiency. His judgement and grasp of affairs was so sound that instinctively his colleagues as well as the public turned to him for his guidance and advice in the solution of difficult problems.

“He used every ounce of his strength and vigour in the service of the country and like a true soldier died at his post in the discharge of his duty. Indifferent health and the advice of his friends and doctors could not dissuade him pursuing, without flinching, what he regarded as his duty. A true representative of the broad humanitarian culture which has been evolved in India through the contribution of people of many races, many religions and many traditions, he had profound faith in the future of the nation. A combination of exceptional qualities of intellect, emotion and imagination made him truly a leader of men whom his grateful countrymen will not easily forget.”

At 6, King Edward Road, Rafi Ahmad's residence, mourners numbering more than one lakh had a last glance at the dead body of the departed leader which was kept in the big hall of his residence. They wept, cried, sobbed and prayed for the eternal peace of his noble soul. Among them were his numerous friends and colleagues and thousands of those who

had always been helped by the departed leader in numerous ways—the orphans, students, journalists, political workers and commoners. Congress leaders, Union Ministers, Ministers of U.P., the Chief Minister of U.P., the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, industrialists and Members of Parliament had all come to pay homage to their leader and colleague. They were grief-stricken and stunned. But there was the usual calmness and contentment on Rafi Ahmad's face. Since he died and till his deadbody was taken to New Delhi railway station, recitation of the Quran echoed the hall and other rooms of his residence. His lieutenants and colleagues, Ajit Prasad Jain, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Keshav Dev Malaviya, Firoz Gandhi, Mahabir Tyagi, Jagan Prasad Rawat, Dr. P.S. Deshmukh, Raj Bahadur, Krishanappa—all grief stricken—were busy in making arrangements. Pt. Pant, the U.P. Chief Minister with a number of U.P. Ministers, Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad, the Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir and his other Ministers were all there. The number of mourners went on swelling. Maulana Azad led the Namaz-e-Janaza—the prayer for the dead which was attended by a large congregation. At 4 p.m. the cortege carrying Rafi Ahmad's dead body started for the New Delhi Railway Station among deafening slogans of 'Rafi Ahmad Kidwai Zindabad', 'Annadata Amar Rahe', 'Long live Rafi Annadata'. There was a shower of flowers and wreaths on the cortege as the three mile long procession passed through Queensway and Connaught Circus. A huge crowd, numbering half-a-million, accompanied the procession, while thousands stood on house tops and balconies. Wreaths were laid on the cortege by the heads of diplomatic missions of various countries and all of them paid their homage. A special train took the dead body to Barabanki. It was really a touching scene at the New Delhi Railway Station. Lakhs came to see off the departed leader who was their benefactor and very many

broke down. All the Cabinet Ministers, a large number of Congress M.P.s and others were present on the occasion. A number of his closest colleagues alongwith the members of his family accompanied the dead body and the author was also among them. In the compartment where his body was kept on a raised platform, till the end of the journey, a number of persons kept reciting Quran and made prayers for the eternal peace of his noble soul. Thousands and thousands had gathered at all the intermediate stations—Ghaziabad, Hapur, Amroha, Rampur, Bareilly, Shahjehanpur, Hardoi, to have a last glimpse of their leader and at some of these stations the train had to be detained longer because of surging crowds. Lal Bahadur Shastri, Ajit Prasad Jain, Bal Krishan Sharma, Firoz Gandhi, Raj Bahadur, Mahabir Tyagi, Satish Chandra, Keshav Dev Malaviya—all were on this train. Lal Bahadur Shastri alighted at every station and tried to control the unmanageable crowd. When the train reached Lucknow, it seemed as if the entire population of the city had come to the station. Pt. Pant with his Cabinet was present to receive the body with full honours but all the arrangements broke down as the huge crowds pushed forward to have a look at their dearest leader, who had lived in Lucknow for a very long time and it was with great difficulty that the crowd was controlled. At Barabanki, the home town of Rafi Ahmad, thousands of mourners were present. The army played with drums the Dead March and the gun carriage started for Masauli—Rafi Ahmad's home. On both sides of the routes there were thousands of people weeping over the death of their leader. The author had never seen such a mourning and pathetic scene which he saw while travelling in the special train from Delhi to Barabanki where milling crowds bitterly wept, broke down and lamented at the loss of their beloved leader.

It took several hours for the funeral procession to cover the distance of eight miles from Barabanki to reach Masauli on account of large crowds. Very many reached Masauli after covering a distance of 50 miles. This last journey of Rafi Ahmad in the words of 'Rafian', published in the *National Herald*, New Delhi in October 1972 was :'' the triumphal procession of a public hero''. Perhaps no public funeral in post independence memory had been attended by so much private and personal sorrows. After the national salute and the Namaz-e-Janaza which was again attended by thousands, his dead body which was now clad only in the coffin cloth was lowered into the grave just near the family graveyard. Three volleys from army firing party announced that Rafi Ahmad had returned to the earth and thousands of mourners threw clods of earth to cover the grave.

To Nehru, who was away in China on tour, the sad news of the death of his dearest and closest colleague was both extremely shocking and stunning and in a message to the nation he said :

“I can say little about Rafi Ahmad Kidwai except that his death is a loss I can hardly bear from personal and public points of view. For 35 years we worked together in the closest comradeship through the ups and downs of our struggle for freedom and later as members of Government. The passing of old comrades always brings a wreck and a sense of loneliness. Shri Kidwai's death is even a deeper blow.”

Thus died one of the embodiments of sympathy and kindness, the most popular yet the toughest and organisationally the most deeply rooted Muslim nationalist leader of the

Congress. In the words of 'Rafian' in his series of articles on the life of Rafi Ahmad Kidwai in the *National Herald*, New Delhi in October, November, 1972 :

(he who) "...was the un-official ombudsman against misdeeds, corruption and tyrannies of the establishment, with a country wide practice, an administrative magician who had struck the word impossible from his own dictionary, the most successful Food Minister in our post independence history and who had provided succour in need of distress, sorrow or tragedy, sickness, joblessness and poverty, injustice, callousness and corruption, a legendary political figure and the legendary Hatim Tai of his days in India, whose house teemed with guests he had never seen before."

According to Maulana Azad, "Rafi's name would appear in letters of gold among those who sacrificed their all for the country's good at the time of the struggle and helped in consolidating that freedom."

To P.D. Tandon—who was the main political adversary of Rafi Ahmad and who had nothing in common with him, Rafi Ahmad had no communal outlook while to Dr. Kailash Nath Katju, he was definitely of the purest non-communal outlook. While paying a tribute editorially the R.S.S. organ said that Rafi alone among Muslim leaders had no strain of communalism in him. According to U.N. Dhebar, one of the Congress Presidents of the Indian National Congress : Who can claim to have lived a truly national life, Shri Rafi could be considered to be one.

Rafi Ahmad created a profound impression on the people of India and his memory they still cherish in great love, venera-

tion and gratitude. In the rather clouded political sky of India, he is the Sun still shining and providing guidance for purposeful planning and action for popular welfare. Common people throughout the country always looked to him as an unfailing friend and an affectionate guide and they adored him and looked up to him for hope and inspiration. He was not a man who believed in talking but in action—silent action for popular welfare. What a glorious man and what a glorious tradition he has left behind! His was, in fact, a glorious sojourn on earth, but what a glorious one ! His sincerity was transparent and his devotion to the country adorable. A rare combination of kindness, determination and integrity, his qualities went to make him unique in the greatest characters of history. It is no wonder he has left a grand impact of his wonderful personality on the minds of India's vast population.

XVIII

As a Man and Administrator

ACCORDING TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU who had worked for 35 years in close comradeship with Rafi Ahmad “he was an odd person, a kind of person one does not usually come across. There are persons greatly devoted to national causes. It is difficult to measure these things. But the queer combination of things that represented Rafi Ahmad Kidwai was undoubtedly unusual.”

As an administrator Rafi Ahmad believed in ensuring free flow of information relating to his departments through a wide variety of sources. He was always able to gather fuller and more accurate knowledge of public feelings, market news and working of administrative machinery than merely through the senior officers of the department on particular issues. Another great quality which contributed much to his success was his great capacity for bold decisions and initiative. Once the correctness of a particular step or course of action took shape in his mind, he took counsels with his senior department staff and proceeded to see its implementation with utmost expedition. In the execution of any such task, he brooked no excuse or

delay. He was not a conventional administrator who determined and achieved aims of an organisation and established broad policies for its operation. What sets him quite apart, makes him quite different and distinguished from other Congress contemporaries, colleagues and administrators was his pragmatic and mass welfare oriented administrative skill. This won him much love and gratitude of his countrymen. He was a great administrator with a freshness of mind, the ability to make new contacts, imagination, drive and to assimilate new experiences. He imbibed qualities of positive eagerness for public responsibility, a readiness to take risks, a growing power to deal with more and more diverse people, a bent towards action, a desire to ask penetrating questions the answers to which illuminated the problem before him, ability to be unusually effective with people, ability to have the ablest persons around him, ability to use his institutional resources, ability to avoid using power or authority for their own sake, ability to welcome report of troubles sometimes, lest they should reach unmanageable proportions, ability to work in a team, ability to pursue tirelessly means of improving administration, of all of which he was responsible, and ability to have respect for the political masters, that is, for the people of India.

He had the basic ingredient of a good administrator, that is, integrity, intelligence, imagination, courage, initiative, drive, sympathy, broad interest, large heartedness, resourcefulness and tact in getting the problem solved. Integrity was the foundation of his administration. Without this, his basic approach would have been vitiated. The greatest blessing that God confers on man is good consequence and the initial elements of the approach to any problem of administration must begin with this blessing and Rafi Ahmad was with it.

Intelligence is an essential and highly valuable asset of a good administrator. He must harness his intelligence to the fullest extent but its use should always be tempered with integrity and experience and Rafi Ahmad possessed all these qualities. The most important corner-stone of his administration was open mind, courage and justice. As an administrator he had to grapple with many human problems. He demonstrated that a flexible and pragmatic approach was the best. He saw the total situation and never acted on just a part of it. He always learnt all about a particular problem. He listened patiently and talked little. He was a man of few words. Whatever he heard, he did swallow. He chewed before arriving at a decision. He was never deceived by abstract theories which leaned to discourage logic. He realised that most problems were full of emotions which were not always logical. He was a man of great courage and was very bold and courageous in taking a decision. Courage was his salvation in danger. He was a just and fair-minded administrator. He strictly followed this maxim that justice should be speedy and he demonstrated this by his quick decisions and quicker action. He also demonstrated that efficiency and popularity could go together.

For a good and successful administrator it is essential that he should have the capacity to work with others and should bind a number of persons working together, Rafi Ahmad possessed this great quality also.

He brought a pragmatic approach to administration and was almost unconventional and unorthodox in tackling administrative problems. He did not believe in the rigidity of rules. He changed them to meet public convenience. He wanted quick results and could brook no delay in the solution of any problem. He was an astute judge of men and put the right man on the right job. He laid broad policies and kept a close

watch on their implementation by bureaucrats. Never for a moment did he relax his relentless monitoring. He never allowed the bureaucracy to overwhelm him. Under the provincial autonomy introduced by the Act of 1935, the real power was in the hands of the Governor and the I.C.S. officers who ran the entire administration were under his direct control. So the ministers could not take any drastic action against such officers but even under such limitations, Rafi Ahmad was strong enough to take action against those who showed any arrogance or insubordination.

In 1946 he took to task the English Inspector General of Police for his serious lapses and he had to seek premature retirement. He was never overwhelmed by bureaucracy. On the contrary, he was always on the top of it. His mind was not cluttered with theoretical impediments. He had the uncanny ability to reach the heart of difficult and complicated problems by his rare and exceptional qualities of clear-sightedness, realistic outlook and originality of approach. He knew how to create efficiency and effective men. He combined in a remarkable degree high moral courage, indefatigable energy and pragmatic approach to all problems. His capital asset lay not in learned discourses or prolonged study of difficult problems or abstract theories but in massive common-sense and an intensely practical mind which he brought to bear in the solution of knotty issues. He had an uncanny intuition in coming to a decision which proved to be correct. His sense of timing was superb. In the words of Rajaji, "Here was a Congress leader who when called to administrative work could be just and efficient administrator and get on most happily and get the best work out of tape-bound officials." He never succumbed to cumbersome routine but developed the technique of direct administration when a job was to be done and that too expedi-

tiously. To C.D. Deshmukh—a former Union Finance Minister, “his methods were unorthodox but his achievements were substantial.” Independent and always contemptuous of files he always took a practical and common-sense view of things.

His splendid achievement on the food front which confounded many an incurable pessimist may be regarded as a miracle. His profound capacity of intellect, his power of keen observation, the deep insight, with which he could probe into the most complex intricacies of any matter or situation that confronted him, his great foresight which enabled him calculate with amazing precision and accuracy consequences of any step he took or measures he introduced in the field of management of department in his charge, his mastery of details and over and above all his quick and penetrating judgement made him the most successful administrator. His notings on files were few, short and cryptic. He was considered to be one of the top rank efficient administrators and inspired utmost confidence in the officials who worked with him. According to an officer who had worked under as many as 11 ministers, including Rafi Ahmad, “he was the best and the most efficient among them. He could devise solutions for difficult problems and had enough drive to make them work administratively.”

Immediately after independence, Rafi Ahmad expressed his views on the administrative set-up of the country. He was of the view that if the Congress Government did not take immediate steps to change or overhaul the administration and its machinery, they would not be able to do so later on. He came out with the suggestion that all the old I.C.S. and police officers should be compulsorily retired and substituted by persons having the country's interest uppermost in their minds. Regarding

the availability of right type of persons to take the place of old officers he said that in their place youngmen should be recruited from the Universities. In the beginning they would make some mistakes, but would be trained soon to run the administration according to the Congress concept and ideals. According to him it would not be possible to make any great progress so long as the present administrative set-up remained. He bitterly criticized his colleagues for not accepting his proposals and taking the worthwhile risk. The country would have been free from many ills and corrupt practices so widely rampant and would have made greater progress if Rafi Ahmad's suggestions about the overhauling of the administrative set-up had been accepted.

His administrative methods were very interesting. He would first study the whole problem himself, discuss it very thoroughly with his staff and arrive at some decision. Once he had taken a decision, he would neither waver nor falter. In the advocacy of causes of which he was convinced, it was difficult to find his equal. He was fearless on the pursuit of principles which he considered to be right. Adverse consequences or personal attainments were of no consequence to him.

When he mooted the scheme of Night Air Mail, he stoutly demolished with his granite strength all the arguments which had been advanced against the scheme and succeeded in getting his scheme passed by the Parliament and pushed through it despite the stiff opposition, grave objections and reservations of the technical experts. It turned out to be a resounding success because of his sturdy common-sense in a way. He believed in cutting out the frills and getting down to brass tacks. His unorthodox and unconventional methods

brought him into conflict with some of his ministerial colleagues but the differences seldom remained unreconciled and left no trail of bitterness.

Similarly, he stood like a rock in the matter of the removal of controls on food and would brook no opposition from any quarter whatsoever. He stuck to his guns inspite of stiff opposition from very strong quarters and successfully accomplished his policy of removing all irksome controls on food and this very bold decision of his helped the country to turn a situation of scarcity into one of self-sufficiency.

His incognito visits to most establishments, police thanas, post offices, Government godowns and Government fair price shops or ration shops when he was the Home Minister of U.P., Union Communications Minister and Union Food Minister in the tradition of the Abbasid Khalifa, Harun-ur-Rashid, to acquaint himself with the actual conditions of the people and state of affairs, kept all the officers and staff under him always alert.

To the task of administration he brought to bear his rare and exceptional qualities of clearsightedness, originality of approach, administrative talent and a wide and human sympathy and understanding. His work as a Minister of Revenue Home and Jails in U.P. was so successful that his elevation as a Union Minister in the First Cabinet of Free India followed as a natural course. He had an uncanny knack of having a clear picture of the future. No member of the 'steel frame', that is the I.C.S., was too tall for him.

Before Gandhiji undertook his last fast unto death in Delhi in January 1948 in order to restore communal peace and harmony, he had advised Sardar Patel to adopt measures to

bring normalcy in Delhi and bring the situation under control by consulting Rafi Ahmad, who had succeeded in suppressing communal riots in U.P. when he was the state's Home Minister.

He was essentially a man of the masses. Anybody could approach him. Among all the Indian political leaders and ministers whether Central or Provincial he was the one in closest touch with the people. His intimacy with them brought him face to face with the difficulties they had to suffer in silence. He was very sympathetic to people and he could fully understand all their miseries, worries and woes as he was a part of them. To his residences, both in Lucknow and in Delhi, flocked in a large number of all shades of persons from all parts of U.P. and of the country.

These visitors had peculiar problems but the most amazing thing was that the peculiarity of problems never puzzled him and equally amazing was that none of these numerous visitors went from his place disappointed or unhappy. They all had this feeling that Rafi Ahmad would do his best for them and if he could not, no one else would.

When in Delhi, while on his way to his office, he asked some of his visitors to accompany him to his office in the car and disposed off their problems on his way. He received visitors in his office as well. The most remarkable and astonishing thing was that he knew all his visitors by their names although he kept no record of them. This could be possible because of his prodigious memory. Still more amazing was that he knew the problems of all his visitors and would do whatever he could to solve them. Another most remarkable thing about him was that in the midst of governmental position.

and immense popularity, he remained essentially and fundamentally a normal human being, kind and considerate to all without any distinction. He did not accept the medical advice of not seeing such a large number of visitors, to avoid strain, which was most harmful to a heart patient like him. He never lost his temper. What made him endearing was that he could not see people in distress.

Most of his income was spent on poor students who received generous help from him, to arrange marriage and other needs of numerous persons. As this was not enough, he had to incur debt to meet the demands of those who sought his help. When he died, he had left behind a debt of over Rs. 90 thousand and this was on account of his generosity towards the needy. He had the divine gift of heart which felt for others and was generous without any calculation. His generosity and spirit of service knew no limitations. There are numerous cases of those whom he generously helped. To relieve the distress of a person in difficulty was an essential part of his nature. He was generous not only to comrades belonging to the Congress fold but also to others—even his bitterest political opponents and foes, and he seemed to derive pleasure to oblige them. In fact, there is such a huge stock of human stories associated with Rafi Ahmad's generosity and about helping people that one can write even volumes. One student of the author was unable to pay his University dues as his father was too poor to help him and on recommendation of his case by the author to Rafi Ahmad, he gave him a cheque covering his due for the entire session. In another case, a research scholar of Lucknow University could go to Hyderabad, Delhi and Bhopal to collect his research material only through Rafi Ahmad's generous help. Whenever any needy person approached him, he never hesitated to help him. He gave a big amount to one of his political

opponents, who was trying to ease him out of U.P. Congress, for the marriage of his daughter and this so much moved him that he gave up his opposition and became one of his ardent supporters. How many old friends of his and how many poor people, orphans, widows and the forlorn received his help; how many students completed their studies; how many went abroad for higher studies and how many schools, or institutions and organisations received help from him regularly, it was known only to those who received his help, and to God. He had one joy and that was of giving away to others.

When he was the Home Minister of U.P., his cousin Mustafa Kamil Kidwai of U.P. Judicial service was transferred to Lucknow. But Rafi Ahmad got the transfer cancelled because it would have disturbed the existing incumbent since his wife was studying at a college in Lucknow. At times some people tried to deceive him and under some false pretext or the other succeeded in getting money from him. But he helped even such fellows on the ground that they badly needed money, knowing it fully well that they were trying to deceive him. It is impossible to recount the number of ways in which he helped the people. He had great sympathy for political workers, political sufferers and freedom fighters. Those political workers who came into contact would come to know that a mighty flood of sympathy always flowed from him. Of all the Congress leaders, he alone understood their difficulties. He knew their domestic problems, worries and outside strains, and helped them a lot in every possible way. Very many of them got their daughters married because of the very generous financial help they received from him. He was of the view that if they would not be helped they would either give up political work or join some other political party in sheer frustration, and this would weaken the Congress.

He had another great quality of overlooking human failings and shortcomings. He forgave any one for any thing and never grudged any body for any thing. Once some colleagues of a nationalist Muslim worker of Delhi condemned him for having gone to Pakistan. But Rafi Ahmad held their condemnation unjustified and he took them to task as to why they had not helped him in getting some job here as he was the only earning member of his family. He fully sympathised with him.

He had so much solicitude for his comrades that when they were in jail he sent money from jail to help their families. One of his co-prisoners, who was also secretary of a District Congress Committee, came to know from his brother after his release that on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter, Rafi Ahmad had sent money from jail as a marriage gift.

His house was always full of a large number of guests and among them were very many commoners and ordinary political workers. He treated the elite guest less than the commoners who stayed there even for weeks and months. Very many came without beddings in winter and they were supplied with. Also, they had every thing free—free telephones, free laundering and a number of them were given the railway fare with extra money for their return journey.

A number of charitably disposed persons placed large amount of money at his disposal as they trusted him implicitly and were convinced that their money would go to the most deserving persons. With such money he helped a number of needy persons and institutions.

To sacrifice his own comfort, convenience and interest for the sake of service to others in adversities and in need of succour was his philosophy of life and it recognised no

social barrier, no distinction and no discrimination. During years of hard struggle for freedom, in which his generation was engaged, he went through personal difficulties, misunderstandings, prejudices and even hostility, sometimes, from unexpected quarters with remarkable poise and dignity. He placed man as man on the highest pedestal of dignity and self-respect and disregarded all older shibboleths, propped up by stupid pride of ancestry. In Rafi Ahmad the commonest and the humblest found a heaven of refuge and he found himself quite at home with him. People went to him in anguish and distress but after seeing him returned with smiles. To him, the greatest virtue was to help others. His another great virtue was that he never allowed his beneficiaries to feel small.

Once he was flying to Madras and an elderly Sindhi lady was also going by the same plane to see her husband at Madras, who was seriously ill; but she could get the seat only up to Hyderabad. In order to make room for this lady, Rafi Ahmad asked one of his personal staff to reach Madras by train. On another occasion when, as the Home Minister of U.P., he had reservation from Meerut to Lucknow and he was to board the train at Hapur, his berth had been occupied by someone else. The railway staff at Hapur asked the passenger to vacate it but he refused and this led to exchange of hot words. Rafi Ahmad felt greatly perturbed that the passengers had been disturbed on his account. As he did not want to cause any inconvenience to the passengers, he said that he had changed his mind due to some urgent work and would not go by that train. Hearing this, all the passengers of the compartment offered to gladly vacate the whole compartment but Rafi Ahmad did not listen to them and his luggage was taken down. As the train moved, he found that there was room just enough to sit in an inter-class compartment and he hurriedly got into it and spent the

whole night awake. This shows how much concern he had for the convenience of others.

He remained absolutely calm, unmoved and unaffected even in the most difficult situations and worst crisis and did not lose his temper. Crisis of the worst kind never ruffled him. He always conducted himself with an air of tranquil self-confidence and composure which made him affable to both the gentle and the closed ones. His deep sense of affection disarmed all those who came in contact with him.

He possessed an extraordinary treasure of practical sense and worldly wisdom. In the words of the world-renowned Indian historian, Dr. Tara Chand, "He had strong likes and dislikes and people reacted towards him strongly. He had, therefore, many devoted friends and a great number of implacable enemies. His powerful sense of personal loyalties brought him into many conflicts which he appeared to enjoy. But in the midst of controversy, he was cool and collected. Nor did the most anxious moments in a crisis disrupt him. He had abundance of courage and in disputes he stood his ground unflinchingly."

According to Babu Jagjivan Ram, "He fought with gloves off his political opponents outside and inside the Congress and he was one of the great men of the Gandhian era who fought vigorously when the fight was on but became affable and genial thereafter immediately."

He valued friendship above every thing else and his friends, therefore, were always sure of his support as a matter of course. His loyalty to his friends was proverbial.

The memory of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi—one of his very close friends and the President of U.P. Provincial Congress Committee who had fallen a victim to communal frenzy, always lingered in his heart as a pestering wound for he could never forget his noble sacrifice. This is one of the examples. He was a comrade who never failed and whose friendship stood all strains.

Another great quality of his was that throughout he maintained a strong sense of humour. He was always lively in company and cracked jokes and enjoyed these fully. This great quality with his usual cheerfulness went to make him a lovable personality and added more to his popularity.

Despite the fact that he was highly sensitive, he never became emotional. He was intensely undemonstrative about every thing great or small he did and he even functioned as though in a casual way. Although he did not care to make a show or even privately acknowledge his personal feelings, he was deeply affectionate in nature and a singularly devoted friend. In U.P., even today, one has only to mention the name of Rafi Ahmad to hear a new story of his loyalty to his friends and of his generosity to his enemies. Both in private and public life, he was unflinchingly loyal to his friends and colleagues and life-long comrades.

He made no distinction between Hindus, Muslims, Christian, Sikhs, Parisis etc. and knew no difference based upon caste or creed. He had the purest non-communal outlook. Even his bitterest political opponents admitted that he had no strain of communalism in him and was a staunch nationalist. He had also the unique distinction of being a Congress Muslim leader having the largest Hindu following.

As a great exponent of Indian nationalism, he was from the outset dead set against the 'two-nation theory'. He could not divide Indians into Hindus and Muslims. To him they were all sons of India. He always exhorted his countrymen not to think in terms of hostile religions but in terms of Indian and become Indian in the true sense of the word. He had in him the best traditions of India. He was a true representative of the composite national culture. His personality was a happy blend of a Muslim and an Indian. His Muslimness did not come in the way of his Indianness or nationalism or his identification with nationalist aspirations. After partition, he stood by his right as an Indian citizen and it was his abiding faith in Indian nationalism which gave him courage and strength to fight and win many political battles at times when Muslims had become highly demoralised.

He always put on sherwani, kurta, pyjama and Gandhi cap of hand-spun *Khaddar* and in winter, the sherwani was replaced by a woollen one (not mill-made). He was very simple in food and dress. He never missed his daily bath. He was fond of smoking and generously offered the finest brand of cigars and cigarettes to those of his friends and visitors who smoked. He took pleasure in distributing lighters, fountainpens and wrist watches among his friends. He loved high-speed driving and changed his cars every six months. He was a voracious reader of fiction.

Since by nature he was extremely shy and disdainful of publicity and lime-light, very little of his magnificent contribution to the country, the national struggle and to the Congress has come on record. Not being a good speaker and embarrassed before crowds, he addressed a public meeting when it became almost unavoidable. At the A.I.C.C. sessions he preferred to sit

with other members of the Committee and talk with them instead of sitting on the dias with prominent Congress leaders. At some of the Congress sessions he did not move out of his camp to attend it. At the Nasik Session of the Congress when a great tussle was going on between Nehruites and the supporters of Mr. Tandon—the then Congress president, Rafi Ahmad, who had taken the most prominent part in the Congress presidential election by sponsoring the candidature of Acharya Kripalani for Congress presidentship, preferred to stay in his saloon. He never came round Gandhiji. It was very rare that he went to receive or see off any leader or any V.I.P., including Nehru, the Prime Minister. He seldom attended State banquets and receptions. In the words of Nehru : “I remember for long years when many of us used to stump the country-side and deliver speeches, Rafi Ahmad never spoke in the public. It was a joke amongst us. He was a quiet worker and speaking in public was always somewhat distasteful to him. He spoke quite enough and more in private groups but not in public meetings. And so he quietly worked and probably knew more individuals in India as colleagues, friends and comrades than anybody I know of.”

He was a great patriot. He counted no cost too heavy for promoting effective participation in the country's fight for freedom even at times when the prospects were not bright. A man of great courage, he contributed magnificently to the success of freedom struggle in his own inimitable style. He had been the great riddle of Indian public life both during the days of the freedom struggle and after when he assumed governmental power both in his home State of U.P. and at the Centre. But he remained the same simple sweet Rafi Ahmad, always accessible to the people, high or low—to low especially, and always trying to be of some help to them.

He was reckless in action and bold in his expression. He was what he believed in. He was not dominated by any one, however great he was.

He was a man of few words and wrote sparingly. He seldom wrote letters to friends. Whenever he wanted to discuss anything important with any friend, he either made a telephone call or sent a telegram to him. His record of three years as a member of the Central Assembly as a Speaker had been almost bland. Reference is only to his penetrating and embarrassing questions and supplementary questions.

He was one of the most selfless persons and had no love for money or worldly belongings. He had something of a Robinhood in him of fleecing the rich and feeding the poor. But his methods were gentle and persuasive. He never disappointed any political worker, widows, poor students, indigent and sickly persons or whosoever came to see him. If he had no ready money with him, he would instantly borrow from a friend or overdraw in his bank account and give to the needy. His generosity saved the lives of a number of fathers about to commit suicide as being unable to have money to pay for the dowry or marriage of their grown-up daughters. He hated ceremony and he never exploited the difficulties of anyone and even when his enemies were in trouble he was all out to help them.

When he was the Home Minister of U.P. he issued orders for the immediate release of a U.P. Journalist who happened to be his staunch critic and who had been arrested for his highly objectionable communal activities. When Rafi Ahmad heard the news of the death of his wife, he received him at the gate of the jail and made arrangements for his flight to Delhi to

perform the last rites of his wife. He was after nothing and wanted nothing. He remained a shining star, brilliant, constant, giving light and lead to all those who sought it. He had a profound faith heightened by a combination of exceptional qualities of intellect, emotion and imagination in the service of the nation.

In the midst of his multifarious activities and very busy life, he used to slip to some unknown place for a few days. He went on this 'underground' visit, as it was called, periodically, both for reasons of health and to observe things for himself or to come out with some unique idea or some new scheme to solve some intricate problem after fully studying it or some new political move. For this he used to go to Okhla (Delhi), Bombay, Lucknow or Kanpur. He used to live in a rented place and no servant accompanied him. He took with him clothes, tea, coffee and some tinned material, dry fruit, biscuits and books. During this period he read books and went through newspapers. Only a few knew about his whereabouts and they were strictly prohibited from disclosing the place of his stay.

He has immortalised himself by his self-surrender, spirit of service, humility, courage and endurance for the causes he held dear in life and his consuming passion for public good and popular happiness. In a way he was a saint. Yet a saint, who chose to do his saintly deeds not in some remote cut-off secluded hamlet far from the madding crowd but in all the pell-mell and turmoil of public life.

His sacrifice in the cause of the Indian freedom and his illustrious role in the making of modern India will place him in the front rank of the architects and builders of the nation

and his name will appear in letters of gold among those who sacrificed their all for the country's good at the time of the Struggle and greatly helped in consolidating the hard-won freedom.

His life was an unbroken saga of loyalty, service and love for the country. He was a dedicated person, not a recluse but a grass-root leader, a builder of society, not an idealist or dreamer but a practical man, not a philosopher dispensing science or a scientist dispensing philosophy but a man capable of giving the whole way to the very end of reason while being conscious of his limits. He possessed an uncanny intuition and foresight in coming to decision which always proved to be correct.

Another most remarkable trait of his character was that in the midst of great governmental power and immense popularity he remained essentially a normal human being—keenly courteous and considerate and full of sympathy to all, without any distinction of caste, religion or region.

He will always be remembered for his highly valuable and unforgettable services to the country. It is difficult to find an epithet for this towering personality. He will live in the hearts and thoughts of his people for long. His life is an unperishable heritage of goodness, greatness and glory. He will be classed as one of the greatest sons of modern India who made their own great contribution for the unity, strength, prosperity and happiness of all the Indian people inhabiting this great country.

As a Political Leader

RAFI AHMAD GAVE up his study of Law to join the great Khilafat-Non-Cooperation Movement at the age of 24 and remained very active in politics till the last days of his life. Even before the commencement of the movement, he had close contacts with Ali brothers, Dr. Ansari, Ch. Khaliquzzaman and Shoaib Qureshi who were close friends of his illustrious uncle, the late Vilayat Ali. This movement provided him the opportunity of coming into close contact with the Nehrus and a number of other Congress and Khilafat leaders and with whom he maintained contacts till last. In the 30 years of hard struggle for national freedom, he went through great personal difficulties, misunderstandings, prejudices and even hostility, sometimes from unexpected quarters, with remarkable poise, patience and dignity. He was one of the shrewdest, most intelligent and astute politicians the country had ever known. To Francis Mudie who was the Chief Secretary of U.P. Government when the Congress Ministry assumed office in 1937-39 and who later on became the Governor of Sindh in 1946 and was a very bitter critic of the Congress, Rafi Ahmad was the most intelligent politician he knew.

He was steadfast in his particular style. He was loyal to his leaders— earlier, to the elder Nehru, Pt. Motilal Nehru and

after his death, to the younger Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, and to his followers, a vast crowd of Congress leaders and workers who loved him passionately and worked with him throughout his career. In U.P. with its long tradition of communal politics, he was the only prominent Muslim leader who had risen to a position of great power and influence first in the State Government and politics, and after independence, in the Central Government and national politics by his own efforts and because of the attraction of his personality. During the last three decades of the British rule in India, when communal feelings swamped nationalism of many old fighters for freedom, Rafi Ahmad remained steadfast as a rock. He delighted in the tough and tumble of politics and on several occasions proved himself a master of tactics.

His conduct as a political leader was unconventional. He took 'Puck like' pleasure in hood-winking his comrades and colleagues and throwing surprises. On the political chessboard of the country, he was in effect its grandmaster deriving delight at each wrong move of his friends and foes alike. He had the unique knack of disassuaging his political opponents.

He was a grass-root political leader. He mixed with all sorts of people alike which gave him a deep insight into men and affairs. His shrewdness was born out of the insight into human psychology which greatly helped him to resolve some of the most ticklish problems of his times. He was a riddle to his friends and foes alike. Neither the one nor the other could predict his reaction. More [often than not he would baffle both but somehow after each bafflement there grew up a greater understanding between him and the persons who were baffled. For instance, in 1948, he decided to contest for U.P. Congress Presidentship against P. D. Tandon who was dia-

metrically opposed to his and Nehru's political ideology. A battle royal was expected and there had been full preparation for the trial of strength. But when the meeting started and ballot papers were about to be distributed, Rafi Ahmad dramatically announced his withdrawal and this went to baffle his supporters and opponents alike. There was a unique touch of originality in everything he did. In this he was inimitable. He was reckless in his actions and bold in his expressions and was never afraid of speaking of his mind frankly. He said what he believed in and was not dominated by any one, however great he was and however close he had been to him. For instance, he was very close to Jawaharlal Nehru and had best regard for him but on a number of occasions he not only differed from him but also openly expressed his opposition and disappointment with some of Nehru's views, decisions or policies. In his last days he once told Nehru that he was an isolated man as people were afraid of speaking out their mind before him. He had the uncanny sense of foreseeing things or visualising the future. On the eve of independence, he was asked as to what Congressmen would do after India became free. He replied that they would fight with each other and this prediction of his proved cent per cent correct as infighting has, unfortunately, become the regular and permanent feature of Congress politics in post-independence India.

He loved to spring surprises on his cabinet colleagues. For instance, once he took out from his pocket two currency notes bearing the same number and quietly threw them into the hand of Dr. Mathai—the then Union Finance Minister. On another occasion, when the imports of costly watches were banned, he produced a gold watch to the bewildered Finance Minister adding that it was a smuggled one.

He could become bitter and sarcastic on occasions when a calculating and power hungry politician preferred to remain

silent. Neither he had the gifts of a prolific and scathing pen nor had he got the oratorical skill, yet strangely enough he bore the organisational burden during the National Struggle for about 15 long years in U.P. He did not possess political showmanship and his chequered political career was not studded with any kind of ritual, very common in pre-independence India. His call was humanism which appealed more to the Indian people than the subtle intricacies of dry politics.

He did not mind criticism. On the other hand he welcomed it. He was a great democrat and a radical and staunch socialist by conviction. He encouraged opposition on political and economic grounds. He stood for the down-trodden and the weak. He believed in mass awakening and action and instances are not wanting when he encouraged popular movements and agitations against the Congress Government in order to have these Governments on the right track. He even wrote articles in the *National Herald*, bitterly criticizing the U.P. Congress Government and its policies in 1947-50. He was not only a dynamic leader but also a past master in evolving strategies for mauling his opponents. In the prime of his political career when he received political training at the hands of the two great national leaders—Pt. Motilal Nehru and C.R. Dass, he achieved success in ousting 'no changers' who commanded the majority in the All India Congress Committee. The scintillating political show was wonderfully stage-managed by his shrewd manoeuvrings.

To him nationalism was synonymous with the greatest good for the greatest number. He believed that human mind or society could not be divided into watertight compartments, called social political and religious. All act and react upon one another. To him, the individual was of supreme consi-

deration. This induced him to save the tenant from the age-long oppression of Zamindari system by piloting the historical U.P. Tenancy Bill which removed some of its oppressions like arbitrary ejection. He believed that the country could not be served by seeking or quoting pet abstract theories but by solid and practical service. As a great champion of Indian Nationalism he was deadly opposed to the idea of a separate political Muslim organisation or the separate electorate. He organised a campaign among Muslims in support of the joint electorate in 1928-29 after the adoption of Nehru Report by the All Parties Conference and the National Convention. He was a relentless crusader against communalism throughout his life. He was the bitterest opponent of the 'two-nation' theory. He was a firm believer in unity in the colourful diversity of the Indian body politic. He remained a passionate advocate of Indian Nationalism. To him partition of the country meant the division of the country and the division of the precious common heritage and culture and therefore he opposed it tooth and nail. As a man of broad vision who could foresee the destruction of the composite national culture and its horrible consequences and he very boldly condemned the hymn of hatred preached by the Muslim League and the policy of animosity and hatred against Hindus for which he was called by the Muslim League fanatics a heretic and 'renegade' or *Ghaddaar*. But he stood firm like a rock.

His Muslimness did not come in the way of his identification with the national aspiration of the country. It was his abiding faith in Indian secularism and democracy which gave him courage and strength to fight and lead many a political fight against chauvinistic communal fascists and reactionaries.

In the midst of power and strife he remained a thorough gentleman without any of the dubious ways and moods poli-

ticians usually adopt to please and retain their affection. He did nothing for cheap popularity and did not seek it nor did he adopt deliberate and calculated means and methods to be in the public eye. He remained a gentle and humble man, working tirelessly, meeting everyone, high or low, who came to see him, and trying to be of help to those who needed it. His favourite ideology was of doing good to the people and relieve distress to whatever extent he could.

He was deeply devoted to the ideology of secularism, nationalism, democracy and socialism and he never compromised with the basic principles for which the Indian National Congress had worked and fought for the best of the country. He was a practical idealist and impatient with obstacles in the path of the life and death struggle for freedom in which Indian people were engaged against the British imperialist Government. He was equally impatient with complacency, red tape and negative dilatory and time consuming methods of bureaucrats in the post-independence India. Whenever he found any section of the Congressmen deviating from the progressive line of action or pushing towards the rightist direction, he did not hesitate to offer strong criticism or to expose those whose deviation from the chosen path or the cherished ideals might tend to weaken the morale of the rank and file of the Congress party. Where there was unity among Congressmen on policies and programme, he ignored minor differences. A man of sound common sense and practical wisdom, he inspired confidence not only among Congress workers but among his countrymen in his capacity to get things done.

Many a youth committed to the goal of independence from the British rule, but belonging to quite a different political ideology, strongly disapproved by the Congress, or even those

engaged in revolutionary and terrorist secret methods, not approved by him in principle, often sought his help which he gladly gave. His approach as a fighter for the country's freedom was, on the one side, for himself and those who shared his political views, to stick strictly to his own party's principles and methods of operation, but on the other hand he fully appreciated the methods of those brave young patriots and had admiration for the undaunted courage of these young revolutionaries in their unequal and fierce fight with the mighty power of the British Empire. He had very close relations with socialists, communists and other radicals. Being a radical and having leftist leanings in politics, he was always keenly interested in the activities of students' organisations and he helped in various ways the Students Federation and later on the Students Congress and the Students Unions of various Universities and Colleges. During his student days in Lucknow University the author was actively associated with the Lucknow University Students Union, the Students Federation, which was a united students organisation till over the issue of people's war in 1941 the communist seceded from it. Later on he was in the Students Congress and from 1945 in the Nationalist Muslim Students Federation. Whenever any conference of the Students Federation was held in Lucknow, he approached Rafi Ahmad and requested him to have some Congress leaders to inaugurate and preside over their conference and it was because of him that they had very many Congress leaders in their conference. Some time in 1940, the Lucknow Students Federation wanted to invite Mr. Kher, ex-Premier of Bombay, to its conference. Rafi Ahmad, despite his severe heart attack, telegraphically pressed Mr. Kher to accept the students' invitation.

In December 1941, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari was to come to address the Lucknow University convocation and the author

as the General Secretary of the Lucknow Students Federation had requested him to address a meeting organised by the Federation but he had declined. On approaching Rafi Ahmad for help, he at once wired to Rajaji to accept the invitation, which he did. On his arrival in Lucknow, Rajaji praised the author and other workers of the Federation for using a good 'trap', that is, Rafi Ahmad for him for he had to comply with his wishes. He addressed the meeting over which Rafi Ahmad presided on the students' insistence. His short and precise speech was also much appreciated by the distinguished visitor. In fact no students conference could be held without his help.

When India became virtually a theatre of war after the Japanese occupation of Burma and because of Japanese air raids over Madras and Calcutta, common man became panicky and on account of the Muslim League's preaching of two-nation theory, the Hindu-Muslim antagonism also posed a serious threat to national unity. At that juncture, the Lucknow Students Federation decided to hold a national unity conference in May 1942 to work actively for unity. It invited Satya Murti, the Madras Congress leader to preside and Sheikh Hisamuddin, the president of the All India Majlis-e-Ahrar and Maulvi Mazhar Ali Azhar, another prominent Ahrar leader, to address the conference. The author who was the General Secretary of the Federation at that time, alongwith other student leaders like Balram Singh, C.M. Avasthi and S.M. Jafar, received at every stage guidance, encouragement and help from Rafi Ahmad who welcomed the conference and made arrangements for the stay of the president, Ahrar leaders and other invitees to the conference which, however, could not be held on account of his arrest and also because of the rapidly changing, rather deteriorating, political situation in the country. In fact, on account

of his arrest they could not succeed in making other necessary arrangements.

In August 1945, a largely attended condolence meeting was held in Lucknow University to mourn the sad death of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose who had died as a result of an air-crash. On the students' request, Rafi Ahmad presided over this meeting. In his condolence speech he recalled the glorious services of the departed leader for the national cause and paid glowing tributes to him and exhorted students to emulate his example and make all possible sacrifices for the country.

In September 1945, there was a big controversy over the revival of Lucknow University Students Union which had been suspended in 1942 in the wake of the 'Quit India' Movement. The Muslim Students Federation—the student wing of the Muslim League, put forward the demand for a separate Union for Muslim students and the author with his other colleagues succeeded in persuading it to agree to his formula according to which there was to be some reservation for Muslim students both for the posts of the Union and for its executive committee and this formula was approved by Rafi Ahmad. This was a clear triumph of nationalists as the Muslim Students Federation had to give up its demand for a separate Union for Muslim students and had to agree for the common union on the basis of the old joint electorate. But, unfortunately, the opposition to the formula by a section of nationalist students, who owed allegiance to Rafi Ahmad's political opponents in the Congress, delayed the restoration of this Union for other full two years, that is, the union could be restored only in August 1947.

In the stormy pre-partition days of 1945, the author had formed the Nationalist Muslim Students Federation to fight the

Muslim League on the student front. Rafi Ahmad not only welcomed the formation of this organisation but also gave every possible help and encouragement. In fact, it was on account of his encouragement, guidance and patronage that the Federation could succeed in establishing its branches in a number of districts of U.P., including Aligarh; wherein Aligarh Muslim University, which in those days had become an arsenal of the Muslim League, this was a strong unit under the effective leadership of Ziaul Hasan Farooqi—now principal of Arts College of Jamia Millia Delhi, Rashid Bilal Khwaja, second son of the late veteran nationalist Muslim leader, Mr. Abdul Majeed Khwaja, Dr. Riyazur Rehman Khan Sherwani—now Professor of Arabic, Kashmir University, Yusuf Ashfaq, now a leading Unani physician at Azamgarh and Jamil Ahmad Siddqi, now a retired teacher of Muslim University City School. This organisation did a lot despite very heavy odds. In the election of U.P. assembly of 1946, teams of workers of the Federation went to a number of constituencies to work for the Congress and nationalist Muslim candidates and Rafi Ahmad gave letters of introduction to its workers and it was because of his guidance that the Federation could do a lot. Earlier, its workers had worked for the nationalist Muslim candidates for the Central Assembly. During a visit of Pandit Nehru to Lucknow, Rafi Ahmad fixed in his room a meeting of its workers which was addressed by Panditji. Panditji was full of praise for its work. While thanking Panditji, the author told him that the credit for this organisation should go to Rafi Ahmad as it was because of his guidance and patronage that so many young Muslim workers could be mobilized.

In 1946, a number of students of Lucknow University, having affiliation with the Congress and the Muslim League, went to work for the candidates for their respective parties in

different parts of the province. On this account a good number of them became short of attendance in the forthcoming examination. The author alongwith other student leaders sought Rafi Ahmad's help who phoned to Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth, the then Vice-Chancellor of Lucknow University, who was soft spoken and sophisticated Taluqadar and had a great regard for Rafi Ahmad. He condoned the attendance of those students and were all sent up. These students were full of parise for Rafi Ahmad and some of them went to him to offer their gratitude to him but the University teachers very much resented the decision of the Vice-Chancellor which he had taken without consulting the Academic Council. They characterised this as his device for gaining cheap popularity. They wanted to censure the V.C. in the Academic Council. Students protested against this attitude of the teachers and at Rafi Ahmad's instance the author met them among whom were Dr. Ram Dhar Misra, Dr. A.C. Chatterji, Prof. Kali Prasad, Dr. A.N. Singh, Prof. D.P. Mukherji and Ch. M. Sultan and they alongwith the author met Rafi Ahmad who succeeded in bringing about a settlement between and the Vice-Chancellor and the teachers.

In October 1946, there was some clash between students and cinema managers of Lucknow over the issue of student concession and this led to the arrest of hundreds of students of the University and Colleges. Rafi Ahmad who at that time was the Home Minister of U.P. visited the jail. The student prisoners presented a number of demands to him **which** included the supply of cigarettes and sweets and in minutes **both** these things were supplied in abundance which the students enjoyed fully and a compromise was brought about within two or three days.

In December 1952, the Aligarh Muslim University Youth Congress held its annual convention. The author who had

joined the University as a lecturer in Political Science (and this was also due to Rafi Ahmad) and was organisation incharge, requested Rafi Ahmad to attend it but he said that he would ask some of his colleagues to attend it but he would have the dinner with the Youth Congress workers. At his instance Mahabir Tyagi, a Minister of State for Revenue agreed to preside over the convention while Ajit Prasad Jain, Minister of State for Rehabilitation and K.D. Malaviya, the Deputy Minister for Natural and Scientific Resources were to address it. Rafi Ahmad alongwith his colleagues reached Aligarh in the afternoon and after attending the reception the University Staff Association had arranged in his honour, he was persuaded by University Youth Congress workers to reach the Union Hall where the convention was to meet. After the presidential address, at the suggestion of the author, the president requested Rafi Ahmad to address the convention and on the insistence of students, he rose to address and received mass ovation. In a brief but impressive speech he recalled his old association with M.A.O. College and exhorted the Youth to come forward to fight corruption, reaction, communalism and work zealously and selflessly for the country. He made a deep impression on the students of Muslim University and they joined the Youth Congress in large numbers because of him. He was their idol and they held him in high esteem.

There is another instance which shows that he had always felt keenly interested in the activities of the youth and students. In May 1953, the U.P. Youth Congress organised a two-week Youth Camp at Takula near Naini Tal. As a member of U.P. Youth Congress Board, the author alongwith a number of active workers of A.M.U. Youth Congress also attended it. It was addressed by Pantji and other U.P. Congress Ministers and leaders. A number of campers were dissatisfied with

some of the policies of U.P. Government, especially with the educational and economic ones and there were lively and heated discussions over them. Rafi Ahmad happened to visit Naini Tal during those days and the majority of campers were very keen that he should address the camp. So the author, along with late Aziz Imam, another member of the U.P. Youth Congress Board who at that time was a member of U.P. Assembly, met him. He had a long talk with them on political problems. He talked a lot about the past happenings, about the role and activities of Jinnah in the Central Assembly, about the activity and role of other prominent Congress leaders and his own; about the current and cross currents of pre-partition, of Muslim politics, Congress politics, factionalism and rivalries in U.P. Congress and also about the current policies of the Congress Government. His talks were very much illuminating and highly informative and showed his deep insight into Indian politics. [If the author had put it down it would have been of immense value to researchers in Indian Politics.] He expressed his deep anguish and grave concern over the rampant corruption which had polluted the whole administrative machinery and suggested various measures through which it could be curbed. Equally concerned he was over the growing moral degradation of the Congress and came out with various remedies for it as well. Instead of addressing the camp at Takula, he invited the campers to a lavish tea party at the prestigious Naini Tal Club. While addressing the campers there, he called upon them to fight for the overthrow of the status quo, not to follow the rigid discipline and other unreasonable restrictions, eschew communalism, wage a total war against corruption, expose publicly corrupt elements and work sincerely for the establishment of an egalitarian society. He fervently appealed to them not to feel despondent but work with determination and anticipated a bright future for the Youth of the country.

The above cited instances clearly show how much keen interest he had in the student and youth organisations and their activities. According to him, there could be no real progress unless the out-dated social order was replaced by a new social order in which there was no place for the numerous age-old evils and social injustices, He expected a lot from the youth and students, provided their activities were directed in right channels.

He was deeply distressed that the trends in public life in post-independence India had reached an all-time low. He would not tolerate corruption of any kind and wanted to purge the Congress of corrupt elements and he vigorously fought for it till his last. He had his own plan of fighting successfully the gravest menace to our democracy. While presiding over the Maharani Laxmi Bai Jayanti Celebrations at Jhansi on 22 January 1949, he called upon the Youth to expose corruption publicly irrespective of the fact from which quarters it came and what exalted position in public life the wrong doers enjoyed.

He held very strong views about Indian Civil Service. To him, bureaucracy was the legacy of the alien imperialist Government and it suited only the alien Government most. According to him, bureaucracy and the Indian democratic set up could not go together.

He held dearly the universal truth that the dignity of man demands obedience to a higher law—the strength of the Spirit—and this had made him a staunch upholder of free press. It was mainly due to him that the *National Herald* which was founded by Jawaharlal Nehru and in the launching of which Rafi Ahmad had taken a prominent part, was able to stave off

many a blizzard before independence and could not be suppressed by the British Government. Throughout the years of its perilous and insecure existence during the Independence Movement, he was its main fund-raiser. He expected impartial criticism of the Government even from the Congress or pro-Congress papers and it was on this account that the *Herald* often severely criticised U.P. Government and its policies which to it were not progressive. He even did not make any demand on the paper which was a part of his and this is corroborated from the following extract of an editorial of the *Herald*:

“In the freedom struggle when the *National Herald* was deprived of the benefit of a normal existence, he was a tower of strength. He never allowed the flag to be lowered. But it must be stated because in the dust of controversy truth often suffered, that he never got any thing in return from the *National Herald*. It was an institution which was a part of his and of which he was a part and that was all. He asked for no quarter even from the *National Herald* and he was given none. . . . During the post-independence period there were bids to squash it as a vehicle of Jawaharlal Nehru’s policies and ideals and Rafi Ahmad successfully thwarted this bid backed by a press baron and his political opponents to take over the *Herald* at an annual meeting of the share holders of the Associated Journals.” He had a large number of pressmen as his friends among whom were editors, renowned special correspondents, political commentators, free-lance journalists and press reporters and he helped some of them financially but he never misused his position or asked for any favour from them.

He had collected around him, in his province, a large group of devoted and loyal friends and colleagues who dearly loved him and who accepted him as their leader. Prominent

among them were, Ajit Prasad Jain, Keshav Dev Malaviya, Khursheed Lal, Mahavir Tyagi, Gopi Nath Srivastava, Gopal Narain Saxena, Bal Krishan Sharma, Triloki Singh, Govind Sahai, Feroz Gandhi, Jogendra Singh, Abdul Hakeem, Abdul Latif of Bijnaur, Sulaiman Ansari, Thakur Hukum Singh, Jagan Prasad Rawat, Salig Ram Tandon, Sitla Sahai, Ahad Husain, Maulana Bashir Ahmad Bhatta, Sarju Prasad of Hapur, Ram Kumar Shastri, Radhey Shyam Pathak, Ganga Sahai Chaube, B.N. Verma, Uma Nehru, Dr. Jawahar Lal, Kr. Khuswaqt Rae, Harish Chandra Bajpai, Lal Sahib of Simri, Sardar Narmada Prasad Singh, Abdul Majeed Khuwaja, Kamla Chaudhri, Abdul Wajid of Bareilly, Ganpat Sahai and Algu Rai Shastri who became his devotee much later. The loyalty and devotion of these persons based on love and affection transcended any obstacle to carry out the behests of their leader who was looked upon for guidance at each critical moment. They were more like a family circle whose members would stand together shoulder to shoulder through thick and thin and would swim or sink together. In the words of Ajit Prasad Jain : "As his colleagues and lieutenants we shared one another's joys and sorrows and weal and woe. Each quarrel brought us closer and made us better and dearer friends. . . . Rafi Ahmad was generous to us and we were faithful to him. Many envied us and we were nicknamed as 'Raffians' and we had over three decades old association." The other U.P. Congress leader with whom he had cordial relations were; Sri Prakash, Mohan Lal Saxena, S.K.D. Paliwal, Dr. Sumpurnanand and Narendra Deo.

Inside the Congress organisation before and after he became Minister in the State and at the Centre, he followed an invariable practice to keep unbroken contacts with Congressmen at committees as well as individually, during his frequent visits for Congress and official tours concerning administrative duties.

He often called at the residences of Congress workers and took interest in their personal affairs and this endeared him to them.

In post-independence period his strategy was to make Jawaharlal Nehru the master of the Congress as he strongly felt that through him a socialist society could be established in India and the Congress purged of reactionary and corrupt elements. Failing to achieve this object he was to get him withdraw out of the Congress and make him the leader of a new progressive radical party in opposition or a viable alternative to the Congress. For four years he fought ferociously on these two fronts till he was forced to resign from the Congress in 1951 and finally succeeded in getting Nehru elected as the Congress president and got his leadership acknowledged and policies accepted by all—thus making him the master of the Congress.

It would be no exaggeration that Pandit Nehru survived more than one conspiracy hatched by reactionary forces inside the Congress and the tribute for it must go to Rafi Ahmad. Nehru admired him and was very much fond of him. In a letter to Indira Gandhi from Jail he described Rafi Ahmad as his closest colleague, expressed his grave concern over his illness in jail and instructed her to send fruits and books to him regularly to Naini Jail after the 'Quit India' Movement and in another letter to her he even wrote : "I wish being sent to Naini jail not that I liked that place but I would like to meet Rafi Ahmad after $1\frac{3}{4}$ years." This shows how much affection and regard Nehru had for Rafi Ahmad.

Rafi Ahmad had very cordial relations with the leaders, prominent members and workers of other political parties—Communists, Socialists, Muslim Leaguers, landlords, Hindu

Mahasabhaitees, revolutionaries and industrialists and some of them happened to be his close friends. He obliged them in very many ways. Some of them sought his advice on political matters and his political opponents used to say that he controlled politics of other parties through his close associates. These political leaders had not only great regard for him but also held him in high esteem.

Politicians are usually in disrepute. They are considered to be vain, shallow and unprincipled. Many of them are corrupt, debunked and are decried because of the way they talk, the way they deal with the people and the way they go ahead with their business. They make promises, they do not and cannot fulfil them. They make people bitter. Most of them are strangers to principles and expediencies are their guide. Like Gandhi, Nehru and Azad, Rafi Ahmad is among the notable exceptions. He suffered for the people and for the country and made politics honourable. For the good of the people, he discharged his duties with a good conscience and ended with good conduct.

He was a staunch socialist by conviction and till the last he always tried for the adoption of socialist policies and programmes of the Congress and stood for nationalisation and early end of monopolies and all favours to exploitation.

He was a relentless crusader against communalism, corruption, money politics, jobbery, rule of bureaucracy, nepotism, capitalism, vested interests, exploitation and bribery and stood for a just social order based on socialist principles, fair deal to the down trodden, a full fledged democratic set up, redressal of public grievances, a clean administration and secularism. He had constituted himself as an "ombudsman for pauper and prince alike". Political leaders like him are born rarely.

Appendix



Dear Mr. Mune

This is to introduce
Mr. Hussein Keshwar,
who has been taking
a leading part in the
organization of Nationalist
Muslim Students. He
will be visiting Bombay
to come in contact
with Nationalist elements
there and I have told
him you are the
best place to arrange

the end.

V
Raf

Collection

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